















POLITICAL SATIRE  
IN  
ENGLISH POETRY

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POLITICAL SATIRE  
IN  
ENGLISH POETRY

by

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formerly Foundation Scholar of  
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*BEING THE MEMBERS' PRIZE ESSAY FOR 1908*

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OF  
MUCH KINDNESS

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## PREFACE

THE following pages were written for the Members' English Essay Prize of 1908. Besides separate editions of the respective poets, I have used the following collections : T. Wright's *Political Songs of England from the reign of John to that of Edward II, Political Poems and Songs relating to English History, composed during the period from the accession of Edward III to that of Richard III, and Political Ballads published in England during the Commonwealth* ; Chalmers' *English Poets* ; Percy's *Reliques* ; *Poems on Affairs of State and State-Poems* ; *The Loyal Garland* ; W. W. Wilkins' *Political Ballads of the 17th and 18th centuries annotated* ; and *The New Whig and New Tory Guides*. Among the critical works consulted I owe a special debt to Prof. Courthope's *History of English Poetry*. I also wish to record my thanks to Dr J. R. Tanner for his criticisms and suggestions.

C. W. P. O.

January 1910.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

From the aesthetic point of view there lies a justification of the historical treatment of literature in the fuller enjoyment of literature which it gives. Even masterpieces gain if we are acquainted with the surroundings their authors worked in, the predecessors whose teaching they bettered, the disciples who endeavoured to make their peculiar achievement a common possession. But minor works depend still more for their effect on our further knowledge of the society within which they were written. We have to use events and social structure and opinions as chemicals to restore the faded tints of these less lasting pictures. Yet after all literature is itself the best guide we have to aid us in reconstituting the conditions among which it grew. Events and social facts give us a framework, but they do not provide a series of photographic impressions of contemporary ideas and notions. That is done by literature, in spite of its tendency, the greater the author the more to

blend the exceptional and the frequent, past and present. Thus alone, for the most part, we are enabled to analyse those shifting currents of the national consciousness, an "ocean where each kind Doth straight its own resemblance find." They form an ever-varying complex, which yet in its main elements and in the methods of its composition has an aspect of permanence.

From this function of literature, as a record of successive phases of thought and culture, is derived a value of literary history apart from aesthetic reasons. We can trace the growth of national qualities, and their interaction with the national fortunes. But there is another side to the matter, on which the study of literary works and even of ephemeral writings has a remarkable importance. They aid us to attain historical perspective, to see things "as they really were." For they show us what was thought by contemporaries of events and opinions that we see only through dissembling mists of time. Ideas now grown classic, deeds that loom heroically to the imagination, are shown to us in the dry light in which their actors and originators saw them. And the contrary holds true as well. Sometimes what to our predecessors was full of meaning, pregnant with destiny, holding the key to the world, has become empty to us. The theory has vanished like another: the imagined source of the future has given birth to a pitiful stream of by-events.

The process of such an investigation brings its disillusion; but, if it takes away from the romance of the Past, it adds to its reality, and also, though perhaps this is an unworthy attraction, to its strangeness. We are made alive to the fact that the Elizabethans wore doublet and hose, that their daily habits of life and government were such and such, and that, in consequence, they took for granted a different world to ours. If their conclusions appear often unjustifiable to us, it is largely a matter of their different premises.

Thus the study of literature, and in particular of political literature, is a necessary factor in the art of history. How else are we to follow Ranke's maxim and narrate events as they actually happened? How else can we make an approach to fairness in our conceptions of former generations? We are to judge the actors in political and social development, as we do generals in a campaign, by the qualities they display among the prepossessions, the doubtful knowledge, the changing rumours, which come in to them day by day; not from our own vantage-ground of complete information as to each momentary posture of affairs and of preacquaintance with the later course of the war.

We may subdivide literature in its political bearing into three compartments, which, however, are far from isolated or even sharply marked off one

from another. <sup>1</sup> There are first those writings which professedly discuss state-affairs and the organization of society in a serious spirit. In this division we may include such diverse classics as Rousseau's *Contrat Social*, and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, such histories as that of Clarendon, as well as the infinite number of tracts and articles on political themes. But though the information they provide is the best and the most exact, it suffers from various defects. There is the narrowness of view of the practical man, the sectional exclusiveness of strong convictions, and that tendency to theorize far beyond surrounding circumstances which increases with the genius of the authors: all defects which serve to distort the true image of the time, although by comparing one with another much may be done to give a correct general impression.

(v) A partial remedy is also supplied by the second category, the incidental light thrown on politics by pure literature. Ranke<sup>1</sup> showed with consummate skill how the literature of the Cinquecento illustrates its politics, even when no political reference is therein made. And the Victorian novelists, one would think, will furnish hereafter the most realistic data on our society and the atmosphere in which our formal opinions exist. This possibility offers a not very cheerful prospect for the

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Popes*, Book I. Cap. II. Sects. 3 and 4, Book IV. Sect. 9.



historians of the future. But then belles-lettres appeal to a limited public. They were far from having too wide an influence among the classes which count in politics, even in the aristocratic and leisurely days of the past, and their presentment, by description or implication, of contemporary life is also tinged by that natural preference for the ideal, not to say the unreal, which characterises works of the imagination.

The third category is formed by direct political satire, both that in prose which would include no inconsiderable part of political speeches and newspaper articles, and that in verse which forms the subject of the present essay. Nothing can be more obvious than the defects of satire. We meet with unfairness, untruth, irrelevance, incompleteness and overcharging at every step. It has the misfortune to be ephemeral in its most characteristic forms, for satires of genius tend to gravitate to the departments either of belles-lettres or of serious discussion. Still it possesses great merits. It was composed for the general public. We may thence conclude that its contents lie wholly within the ideas of the time. It was written to be effective. We may therefore trust its vraisemblance and the popularity of its arguments. Its very narrowness is that of the man in the street or, to go back to earlier times, of the coffee-house politician and the medieval burgess. Perhaps it is not too much to say that in reading political satires

we need never be afraid of stumbling on the anachronous or the exceptional, save of course in mere technique and execution. In short they offer an admirable means towards reconstructing the medium in which past politics existed. No doubt they are a quite subordinate object of historical inquiry, but one none the less valuable within its limitations.

While, however, political satires cast many side-lights on the state-events with which they are concerned, they also have their place in the history of literature for its own sake. Most of them indeed could hardly hold a lower rank in art than they do, but in English at any rate there are a number of brilliant exceptions, which by their intrinsic merit hold a foremost place; and this is specially true of those in verse, which in a few favoured instances even rise to the level of poetry. The chief reason for this distinction is doubtless the high state of political development reached by England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which naturally produced its effect in literature. But there would also be the influence of the practical English character, which turned to satirize definite persons and events and policies, and did not spend itself on vague theories, which would not easily lend themselves to the simplicity and passion of verse.

But the famous satires of the best period, with their expressions of party policy and party hatred,

were led up to by a long development. This is what we might expect. The highly specialized satire of later times has been the product of the highly specialized English constitution and its most peculiar organ, the party-system. What is really more remarkable is the very early appearance of portents of this evolution.

The process begins with those general complaints of the Evils of the Times which are made justly enough at any epoch. The earliest preserved appear to date from the reign of King John, a very natural period, when we consider that the welding of the English into a self-conscious nation was nearing its completion under the unwilling auspices of that monarch. Of course satiric ballads would exist before in all probability, but their preservation shows the interest they now aroused among the political classes. Curiously enough there is something to be said against the citation of these compositions as English political ballads at all; for they are written not against King or Barons, with hits at Magna Carta and the due scale of reliefs, but against the corruptions of the Church; and their language is Latin or Norman-French, never English. But we have to take account of the spirit which animates them and the circumstances of the time. The Church under Innocent III was the greatest political organization extant: the educated classes in the year 1200 would blush to write in English. Then their more

essential characters are lay and national. They are invectives against the defects of the political structure of the Middle Ages, of which the Church formed the most organized part. It is the national grievances of Papal exactions, of misused endowments and of the ecclesiastical courts, with which they are concerned, not with theological discussions or heresy and schism. It is amusing to us to read their irate descriptions of those church-officials who harassed every-day life for its peccadilloes; the archdeacon, most hated of all, with his little court for too frequent steps aside: the rural dean, who, it seems, could make himself very unpleasant, "insidias natus ad aeternas."<sup>1</sup> Still to the sufferers, who were tried under the elaborate Canon Law with its keen cross-examination and its scale of fines, it can have been no laughing matter, and the grievance was not lightened by the gay life which the rigorous and inquisitive clerics sometimes led. The expense, too, of their procedure with regard to such matters as wills, marriages and contracts, which lay within their jurisdiction, was naturally irksome. Nor can we very well blame the satirists for not seeing as we do that the odious courts, which covered the land like a net and intervened at the birth, death and marriage of everyone mulctable, were raising the standard of accepted morality from the barbaric level of the Dark Ages.

<sup>1</sup> One function of the rural dean was to present cases for the archdeacon's court.

Higher game was struck at in the persons of the political bishops of the Angevins, who took a see as a sort of ministerial pension. One song is so telling, with so keen and lively a wit, that it must be quoted. Three bishops under John directed the royal administration and neglected that of their dioceses. The song goes—

Si praesuli Bathoniae  
 Fiat quandoque quaestio,  
 Quot marcae bursae regiae  
 Accedant in Scaccario;  
 Respondet voce libera,  
 Mille, centum et caetera,  
 Ad bursam regis colligo,  
 Doctus in hoc decalogo,  
 Caecus in forma canonis.

. . . . .  
 Wintoniensis armiger  
 Praesidet ad Scaccarium,  
 Ad computandum impiger,  
 Piger ad Evangelium,  
 Regis revolvens rotulum;  
 Sic lucrum Lucam superat,  
 Marco marcam praeponderat,  
 Et librae Librum subiicit.

The gay, tripping metre of these lines and their ready sarcasms give us a glimpse of popular feeling, even though tinged with a little pedantry and equipped with puns almost too ingenious for the vulgar tongue. But they treat of obvious matters, and must, one would think, have been gaily sung to the strumming of his cittern by any clerk like Chaucer's Absolon. Indeed the clerical public was larger and more representative than it might seem at first sight. There was a swarm of clerks in minor

orders, who were by no means segregated from the world, even to the small extent a parson might be. These men no doubt helped to form the views of their neighbours, but their value to us perhaps is chiefly that they reflect feelings fairly general. There is almost a bourgeois tone to be found in their compositions. At the same time it is not the austerer side of life they suggest. Young scholars, fresh from Paris, were not likely to be the most regular of men. They would often be gay wanderers, living from hand to mouth, with a grudge against staid persons who had attained preferment.

But it is possible that a greater man than the ruck of Goliards, as the less reputable clerks were called, took up the style. At any rate the author of *Golias*, the most famous satire on the clergy, was later supposed to be Walter Map, the courtier of Henry II, and other Latin poems, in a similar vein, ascribed to Golias, "the father of the Goliards," were thought his. One composition may be quoted, which attacks not the amphibious bishops of the king, but the Papal Curia itself. It would be a hazardous conjecture to say that it had official inspiration; still it could not have been disagreeable to King John, as it appeared during his quarrel with Rome, when England lay under the Interdict. Besides, the early Angevin kings were by preference firm in insisting on the rights of the Crown and of the secular state as against the claims of the Church. Henry II had begun the long contest between the Common and

the Civil Law over the great debatable tract of criminal and civil jurisdiction to which both ecclesiastic and secular state made mutually exclusive pretension: and the success, which he obtained in spite of his striking defeat in the Becket controversy, gave the general tone to English policy till the Reformation. Nor was the tendency confined to England alone: the rapacity of the Curia was a grievance of Christendom, and "Goliath" satire is at most edged by the sharper English contest. With all its faults of bizarre, infantine art there is no denying the wit of his invective.

Roma capit singulos et res singulorum,  
 Romanorum curia non est nisi forum.  
 Ibi sunt venalia iura senatorum,  
 Et solvit contraria copia nummorum.

Papa, si rem tangimus, nomen habet a re,  
 Quicquid habent alii, solus vult papare;  
 Vel si verbum Gallicum vis apocopare,—  
 Paez, Paez, dit le mot, si vis impetrare.

In comparing this satire on the Curia with that on the Three Bishops, one feels tempted to say that already the two leading varieties of English satire appear in embryo, the popular ballad and the learned invective. Both were to become more natural and more artistic, as they grew to distinctive forms, but the root of the matter is there. The Hudibrastic rhyme and the learned mockery of "Goliath" have some faint kinship with Butler, as the lighter vein of the attack on the Bishops is an unconscious predecessor of *Praed*.



The same complaints continue during the shiftless rule of Henry III, with greater cause, but less merit. Towards the end of the reign, however, the disputes between the King and the Barons give a fresh impetus to satire. One symptom of this may be seen in the *Complaint of the Church* (1256) on the taxation raised by the King and Pope Alexander IV for their scheme to drive the Hohenstaufen from Southern Italy.

Li rois ne l'apostoile ne pensent autrement,  
Mès coment au clers tolent lur or et lur argent.

Now for the first time two clearly defined national parties appear in English history, each with a political programme and conscious ideals. There had been progress in collective national feeling since the days of John. The separation from the erstwhile French possessions of the Angevins, the frequent Parliaments since 1215 with their more representative character, and the mere efflux of time which allowed the slow influences of trade and government to take effect, all combined to increase and solidify an English patriotism. Thus it is a curious coincidence that the earliest political ballad in English which has come down to us is a song of triumph over the Barons' victory at Lewes in 1264. Its excellence presupposes older ballads indeed, but now the guiding classes of the population clearly felt the appeal of the English tongue. How vigorous it is, may be seen from a brief quotation.

The Kyng of Almaigne wende do ful wel,  
He saisede the mulue for a castel,  
With hare sharpe swerdes he grounde the stel,  
He wende that the sayles were mangel  
to helpe Wyndesore.  
Richard, thah thou be ever trichard,  
trichen shalt thou never more.

Poor Richard of Cornwall, the King of Germany here assailed, did not perhaps deserve so severe a scorn, but he shared the fate of all cross-benchers and friends of moderate reform. It was not to be expected that the party he went a quarter of the way with and then deserted would appreciate the fact that he wished for good government, and yet not the destruction of his royal brother's power. Besides, he was patron of the hated Jews and shared in their profits. Yet to the thorough-going Simon de Montfort both his foreign extraction and his greed of possessions were forgiven. The taint of unfairness, already visible in the attacks on the Church, is in fact nearly inseparable from political satire, which is nothing if it is not pointed with malice or indignation.

A nobler production is the Latin *Battle of Lewes*. It is, however, only partially a satire, being in essence a sober statement of the case of the baronial party. Passages of invective are rare, the description of the future Edward I, with its allusion to his armorial bearings<sup>1</sup>, standing almost alone.

<sup>1</sup> The author uses the French blazonry of leopards, not lions, for the royal shield.

Cui comparabitur nobilis Edwardus?  
 Forte nominabitur recte Leopardus.  
 Si nomen dividimus leo fit et pardus.

Leo per superbiam et ferocitatem,  
 Est per inconstantiam et varietatem  
 Pardus, verbum varians et promissionem,  
 Per placentem pallians se locutionem.  
 Cum in arcto fuerit quicquid vis promittit;  
 Sed mox ut evaserit promissum dimittit.

Even here the author quickly turns to an elevated and unembittered tone.

O Edwarde! fieri vis rex, sine lege;  
 Vere forent miseri recti tali rege!  
 Nam quid lege rectius qua cuncta reguntur,  
 Et quid iure verius quo res discernuntur?  
 Si regnum desideras, leges venerare;  
 Vias dabit asperas leges impugnare,  
 Asperas et invias quae te non perducent;  
 Leges si custodias ut lucerna lucent.

This appeal to law, which perhaps really influenced Edward and the future through him, strikes a familiar note in English history; and surely it has never been made in a finer spirit. Its moderation and dignity rest on a foundation of good sense. A law-abiding habit has been instilled into the race by the continuity and regularity of their institutions. Our author was one of those who, taught by Latin theology, helped to raise an habitual preference to the rank of an idea.

The same fairness and patriotism run through the rest of the poem. We hardly have to deduct the outburst against the King's advisers and foreign friends.

Quid si tales miseri, talesque mendaces,  
 Adhaerent lateri principis, capaces  
 Totius malitiae, fraudis, falsitatis

The King's case, perhaps, is given as too purely feudal. Why should the King be fettered in the exercise of his rights, when the barons were not in the exercise of theirs? Yet the writer, though somewhat dimly, sees that kingship is a different thing from feudal lordship. Only God could rule uncounselled and without restrictions: nor does power among men mean the free indulgence of caprice. Then with a flash of insight he declares that actual power depends on personal character. No prerogative could make the unfit lead.

Durum est diligere se non diligentem;  
Durum non despiciere se despicientem;  
Durum non resistere se destituenti;  
Convenit applaudere se suscipienti.

The evils from baronial tyranny can be remedied by the feudal superior, the King: but the evils proceeding from an unwise sovran can only be remedied by the community.

Igitur communitas regni consulatur;  
Et quid universitas sentiat, sciatur,  
Cui leges propriae maxime sunt notae.  
Nec cuncti provinciae sic sunt idiotae,  
Quin sciant plus caeteris regni sui mores,  
Quos relinquunt posteris hii qui sunt priores.

The King rules by and under the law which governs all things, and the law for men is to be found in custom and precedent, to be known as local rights were known by the Inquests of the Angevins. Nothing could be more English than all this, and perhaps the same applies to the rather lame conclusion; that the King should therefore rule with

the counsel of his barons, to whose veiled oligarchy the “universitas” suddenly dwindles. Yet after all this was as far as the subdivision of authority could then profitably go. On the whole the poem leaves an impression of consistent thought and high ideals. It is hardly too much to say that, curiously groping as it is in its medieval way, it strikes the keynote of English political development.

It would seem that there is generally a lowering of tone, as a great political change progresses. Details and ways and means have to be worked out, lesser men join the flowing tide, and a somewhat sordid, but effective, practicality succeeds the visions of genius. So it has happened in the revolutions of the Nineteenth Century, and the same process is not less visible as the despotism of the Angevins changes into the less potent monarchy of the Edwards. Again, party-divisions became obscured: clear issues dropped out of sight under the great first Edward. We find ourselves again among ballads on the evils of the times, heavy taxation—“Non est lex sana, quod regi sit mea lana”—and corrupt oppressive judges. One Latin skit on the latter is lively enough. Undue influence of various kinds, it seems, could be brought to bear upon the bench.

Sed si quaedam nobilis,  
Pulera vel amabilis,  
    cum capite cornuto,  
    auro circumvoluto,  
Accedat ad iudicium,  
Haec expedit negotium,  
    ore suo muto.

## 1] THE EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURY 17

We might almost be listening to an early performance of *Trial by Jury*.

It is not to be expected that all this criticism should be intelligent. One really charming French song protests against the new strictness of the ordinance of Trailbaston ; but the romantic outlaw

En le bois de Belregard, où vole le jay,  
Et chaunte russinole touz jours santz delay,

has only a partial claim to sympathy. He was a public nuisance.

Another song in French and English may be cited for a skilful gibe on the chronic non-observance of Magna Carta, as well as for being an instance of bilingual composition :

La chartre fet de cyre,  
Jeo l'enteink et bien le crey,  
It was holde to neih the fire,  
And is molten al away.

Yet, although the individual satiric poems of the late Thirteenth and first half of the Fourteenth century are themselves unimportant, it is interesting to observe the changes which take place in them. Norman-French disappears under Edward III, at the same epoch as it gives way to English in the Chancellors' speeches to Parliament. Their Latinity too becomes decidedly unattractive ; written in rough leonine hexameters, where the end of a line rhymes with the middle, it seems peculiarly devoid of taste or originality. Very characteristic, too, is the "sentence," or classic tag, trite and ill-applied,

which forms the last line of a quatrain for such as are composed in stanzas. The knowledge of the medieval writer was a patchwork of all sorts and sizes, but for him it was all of equal value, part of the world's accumulated lore. The French and Scottish wars, too, produced a new kind of satire, the abuse, to put it plainly, of inimical foreign nations, which was to be cultivated with greater skill in the reign of Charles II. Four lines on Philip of France will show how bad it can be.

Deficit Ogerus, Karolus, Rodland, Oliverus,  
Cor tibi pes leporis, dat aper tibi facta leporis.  
In proprio climat tibi dicit aper cito chekmat:  
Nec dices liveret, lepus es, aper est tibi firet.

The boar who plays this exceedingly technical game of chess is of course Edward III. Certainly the new feeling of national identity deserved a better singer than this satirist.

A popular king and a successful war do not, however, present the best environment for the growth of political satire. The evils of the decline of Edward III and the misgovernment under Richard II not only revived the genre of writing, but provided at least one really eminent satirist for English poetry.

At this point we are met with the new difficulty as to whether the reviser (B) of *Piers the Plowman* in 1376 be the same as the original author (or authors) of the poem (A) in 1361<sup>1</sup>. But after

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. J. M. Manly's chapter in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. II.



all it is hardly necessary to state an opinion here, for, so far as politics are concerned, B adds fervour and detail to the heads of an indictment already formulated or implied by A, and C, the latest revision (later than 1392), enjoys the benefit of the genius of the former versions. In any case the political side of the poem in all its forms is due to its general denunciation of the Evils of the Times, corrupt clergy, corrupt judges, corrupt ministers. It does indeed show us the steady progress to anarchy the nation was making, with its development arrested by the French wars and the Black Death, its social order decaying and its administration, both lay and ecclesiastical, in many respects vexatious. The inspiration of much of the poetry need only be alluded to: the political philosophy contained does not, perhaps, deserve great praise, and compares unfavourably with that of the *Battle of Lewes*. The King is to rule as a monarch, and be guided by Reason and Conscience, and, this being so, all will be well. The Community will grant ample means to such a prince. In fact, Be good and you will be happy. As a call to righteousness, the poem takes a high place; but it belongs to prophetic, more than to political literature, and somehow or other it does not give that impression of intellectual eminence, which makes the most whimsical scholastic theology of Dante bearable. But, perhaps, it is ungrateful to make such a criticism, remembering the vivid descrip-

tions, the lifelike impersonations, and the peculiar worthiness of the poem.

From the historical point of view one noticeable fact about it is the evidence it gives of the approaching break-down of the medieval polity. It is not merely that there were grievances ; but the very remedies for grievances and the institutions on which medieval society rested had become oppressive. In the Church, the courts Christian were corrupt and a source of petty irritation ; the Friars too often summed up popular vices ; hermits were an odious description of rogue, not easily distinguishable from the valiant beggars soon to appear in legislation. The law courts gave decisions for fear or favour. Lady Mede was the aim of both clerk and layman. The meaning of this indictment is clear, when we consider that these institutions represented the progress of civilization and the means devised to protect the weak against the strong which were the outcome of two hundred years of effort. No wonder the author, whether he be the traditional Langland or another, took refuge like Dante in the idea of the good monarch, though he did not perceive to the degree Dante did the need of organizing society, if τὸ εὖ ζῆν was to be obtained. Yet in some ways he is more advanced than the Florentine. The stress he lays on inward religion, it has been justly remarked, shows the stirrings of the spirit which was to inspire the Reformation. Dante is never happy with his deepest









There can, however, be no doubt of the influence of *Piers the Plowman* itself and of its sequels, the *Visions of Do-wel, Do-bet and Do-best*. That influence was strangely contrary to the monarchical author's (or authors') intention. "His bold words" were "perverted into watchwords of insurgency"<sup>1</sup>; and the call to righteousness became one to robbery and arson in the Villeins' Revolt of 1381, which was itself, like the poems, a sign of the deep-seated evils of the times. But it is remarkable how much less was their effect on the general course of English literature. This was partly due to their metre, as Mr Courthope points out. The old alliterative verse was really best suited for a past stage of the language, and was monotonous and awkward even in the Middle English of the fourteenth century. The new supple style and syntax of Chaucer were only possible in the newly-imported French metres; and an occasionally fine effect of melancholy harmony cannot compensate for their lack. The choice of the old English metre shows a defect in the sense of form, which is borne out by the often homely language and the shapeless structure of the poems<sup>2</sup>. Thus in composition, as well as in ideas, "Langland" threw in his lot with the old order.

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Skeat.

<sup>2</sup> This is true, whether one or more hands be concerned in the various versions. In the first case one man of genius will be responsible for these defects; in the other they will be parcelled out among the authors, the case of the last, who did not see the ruin he was working by his additions, being the worst.

The moral earnestness of the poems does not show any heretical colouring, although we may recognize an affinity with the pioneers of later religious change. But "Langland" was no lover of new things. He looks on all the evils of his day as corruptions of an ideal system, not as the results of the decay of a superannuated one: the notion of recovering a simpler past, so notable among the Lollards and the revolutionary peasants of the day, does not seem much to appeal to him. His imagination was almost oppressed by the present.

It was as well perhaps that these defects existed. Had the style of *Piers the Plowman*, even before the last revision, been more magical, had the poems been less medieval, their monotonous genius might have competed too successfully with the infinite variety and artistic power of Chaucer. It is a case of the survival of the fittest for the fatherhood of English literature.

Meantime the stream of satire flowed on in ballads, Latin and English, for we may surely regard the excessive obscurity of the prophecy which was attributed to John of Bridlington as an excuse for passing by that unlyrical work. The ballads are concerned either with strict politics, or with the quasi-political subjects of the Clergy and the Lollards. The mixed feelings of moderate men during the Villeins' Revolt in 1381 are well seen in a clerkly ballad of that date.



Tax has tenet us alle,  
 probat hoc mors tot validorum,  
 The kyng thereof hade smalle,  
 fuit in manibus cupidorum;  
 Hit hade harde honsalle,  
 dans causam fine dolorum;  
 Revrawnce nede most falle,  
 propter peccata malorum.

Thus hor wayes thay wente,  
 pravis pravos aemulantes,  
 To London fro Kent  
 sunt predia depopulantes;  
 Ther was an uvel covent,  
 australi parte vagantes;  
 Sythenne they sone were schent,  
 qui tunc fuerant superantes.

But Richard's later years clearly set his people against him. Even courtly Chaucer ventured a remonstrance on the "lack of steadfastness" in the government. The rough, popular ballad against his favourites in 1399 has none of the *retenue* of the foregoing: its vigour recalls the exultation over the King of Almaine in 1256. The three favourites are of course the Bushey, Greene and Bagot of Shakespeare.

Ther is a busch that is forgrowe;  
 Crop hit welle, and holde hit lowe,  
 or elles hit wolle be wilde.  
 The long gras that is so grene,  
 Hit must be mowe and raked clene;  
 forgrowen hit hath the felde.  
 The grete bagge, that is so mykille,  
 Hit schal be kettord and maked litelle:  
 the bothom is ny ought.  
 Hit is so roton on ych a side,  
 There nul no stych with odor abyde,  
 to set theron a clout.

Such compositions are scarcely literature; yet they make us see the strange parti-coloured mob

which turned to lynch-law in the first English revolution.

“Moral Gower’s” painstaking Latin attacks on Richard’s reign only require notice as the last use of Latin in satire to impress the general public : they were partly for European consumption and intended to win foreign opinion for the usurper Henry IV. Better written than their forerunners under Edward III, they resemble them in metre and manner. One is glad to turn from them to an anonymous English distich on the year 1391 which is worthy of Chaucer.

The ax was sharpe, the stokke was harde  
In the xiiij yere of kyng Richarde.

During all these years, however, there was also raging another controversy, which produced some spirited compositions. This was the strife between the Lollards and the Church. The heresies which the Lollards represented had, perhaps, never been absent from the West ; but the stress they laid, like *Piers the Plowman*, on the ethical side of Christianity, and their anti-hierarchal doctrines were strengthened by the enmity which was produced by the defects of the Church-machine. The Friars and the ecclesiastical courts and revenues furnished the chief points of attack. Naturally, the best fun that was directed against these comes in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, but the satire of that master cannot be construed as political or even partisan. Lesser men, however, wrote dis-

tinctly for or against change. The most racy assault on the Friars may be quoted.

Men may se by thair contynauce,  
That thai are men of grete penaunce,  
And also that thair sustynauce  
Simple is and wayke.  
I have lyved now fourty yers,  
And fatter men about the neres  
Yit sawe I never then are these frers,  
In contreys ther thai rayke.  
Meteles so megre are thai made,  
And penaunce so puttes ham down,  
That ichone is an hors-lade,  
When he shall trusse of toun.

There is a fine humour here, and the attacked churchmen were not slow to reply with both skill and effect. Whichever won in the lists of satire, they gained the temporal victory. Henry IV came as the champion of the legal way of doing things, and the revolutionary Lollards had not enough responsible support to hold out against Church and State united. With their disappearance and with the triumph of constitutional monarchy, political satire dies down again. We have arrived at the decadence of the fifteenth century.

In poetry, it has been often shown, this decadence was made more complete by the confusion into which the structure of English verse fell. Scansion by syllabic feet, instead of the accentual beats of *Piers the Plowman*, was still novel in the language, when Chaucer raised it to a high pitch of perfection, and scarcely had he effected his work, when the change in the language, already in

progress, was rapidly accelerated. The inflexional endings of the nouns were in course of being dropped : dissyllables became monosyllabic and so forth. Had a genius appeared, it would have been hard for him to have adapted the new verse to so undecided a change. As it was, minor poets like Occleve fell into a metrical chaos. Chaucer's actual licences, guided as they were by his delicate ear, were increased by the horrible jangle produced in him by the new pronunciation, and all together were sedulously imitated. Meantime the rhythm, which guided the elder accentuated verse was largely lost for the same reason. The stressed syllables were left jarring together, after the submergence of the inflexions. A worse than barbaric night settles down on English poetry. Ballads produced by the untrained and unspoilt minstrel represent its best at this time ; but the political ones on the Duke of Burgundy, on Suffolk, and on the Wars of the Roses are too poor to quote. True, there is a fine political treatise in verse, *The Libel of English Policy*, but it is not, properly speaking, a satire or a poem. Inspiration was not dead : the *Mort d'Arthur* was produced towards the close of the Wars of the Roses ; but that great poetical work was written in prose. There was left barely metre enough in which a poem could be made.

## CHAPTER II

### SATIRE UNDER THE DESPOTS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN VERSE

Whatever claims the Tudors made to the Crown by reason of heredity or conquest or Act of Parliament, their real security lay in their vocation as Saviours of Society. The various evils under which England laboured had culminated under the unhappy Sixth Henry. The central authority had become powerless in the hands of the half-insane king; and, even if Henry had been capable, the odds were against the Crown. The prerogative had been prematurely cut short, at the same time as the forces of local disorder had been growing in strength in consequence of the practices of Livery and Maintenance. These latter were largely a result of the adoption of the trade of Condottieri by the great nobles under Edward III. Even in peace they did not fail to keep up the bands of retainers, who served under them in war, and their less powerful neighbours were glad to rank themselves and their servitors in an analogous

position<sup>1</sup>. Thus a kind of degenerate feudal system came into being without a code of feudal morals. Over all the land feudal disorder and oppression broke out. Justice and security were not to be had. The only course, for a country-dweller at least, was to range himself under the banner of some prepotent lord of the neighbourhood. The great nobles, at the head of their dependents and retainers, made tools of the law and the central power, the local organs of which, sheriff and justice of the peace, they controlled. Meanwhile the evils complained of in *Piers the Plowman* continued. The law had become slavish to the prepotent lords as well as corrupt. The Church was losing reverence more and more ; its courts were as of old vexatious ; its prelates were royal favourites ; the monastic orders were ceasing to fulfil any useful purpose ; and scandal was no more silent than before on their misdeeds and those of the secular clergy.

Such a state of things might seem favourable for the growth of political satire when a revival took place. Several circumstances, however, were against any development of the kind. The Tudors succeeded in suppressing disorder partly through the exhaustion of the faction-chiefs. Thus active parties and their disputes, the natural environment of political satire, were wanting. Then the Tudors were popular despots and suspicious withal.

<sup>1</sup> This was done by formal indentures of service.

They rested on the willing obedience of the influential classes. Thus there were no two opinions on most matters of politics ; and the Tudors were careful to suppress any too near approach by a subject to the discussion of state-affairs. Henry VII promptly executed five of his libellers *in terrorem*, and his successors, what with Statute Law and the terrible Star-Chamber, kept a tight hand over malcontents. Perhaps, too, we may add for the later part of the period the influence of the Renaissance. Juvenal and Horace had been social satirists and the ambition of men tinged with humanism was to follow in their footsteps.

In this way the satirists of the time, although there are one or two exceptions, for the most part illustrate political history by their silence only ; and the whole period owes its importance for the rise of later satire to the fact that the forms of English metrification were shaped then, including those which satire was to use.

The most striking of the exceptions that we find, is the laureate of the Universities, John Skelton, a man remarkable in so many ways that it is worth the while to give him and his performances more attention than perhaps their intrinsic merits deserve.

To begin with, Skelton is himself the first distinct figure among English satirists, and one of the first among English men of letters. The author of the *Piers Plowman* series, whether he be one or

five, is a shrouded personality. His history is conjectural, the nature of the man only to be guessed at from random and perhaps fictitious hints. But jolly, ranting Skelton is as real a man as ever was. We know his life and adventures and can make a sketch of his opinions. We know that he was born about 1460, that he was tutor to the future Henry VIII, that he was parson of Diss and father of a family, that he fell out with Wolsey, that in 1529 he died in sanctuary at Westminster. Furthermore his tastes are obvious in his works, his lack of the sense of beauty or form, his learning without judgment, a certain convivial coarseness and boisterous vigour.

Secondly, he was a courtier and satirizes the court. This is really one of the new departures under the Tudors. They were despots ruling through their council, and they could not entrust the control of the central administration to men, who were either too powerful or too little known to them. Hence, like every other race of autocrats, they raised up a new official class dependent on themselves and selected in the first instance from their entourage. The court thus became the centre of politics and a scene of emulous intrigue which offered a butt to all the satirists of the century. Members of the ancient baronage and upstarts of yesterday jostled one another there, all impotent without the royal favour, and all filled with a covert mutual hatred. It was these,



his fellow courtiers, and their doings that Skelton attacked in his first satiric poem, *The Bowge* (or *Rations*) *of Court*. He wrote this work in the jarring pseudo-Chaucerian style, for he had neither the ear nor the judgment to perceive what was wrong. It may be considered as an exposition of a political evil of the time, similar to Barclay, the Canon of Ely's, contemporary eclogues, with which it compares favourably in its power of characterization and fire of verse. The badness of the metre is common to both.

Skelton's natural bent and genius, however, do not appear in this decorous production, which could appeal only to the small class familiar with the seamy side of the new court-life. He finds his real opportunity in giving voice to the national grumbling, of so old a date, on the subject of the Church. There was something of the demagogue, one cannot help thinking, in the loud-tongued parson who so fiercely assailed his own order. In *Colin Clout*, his chief satire against the clergy, he uses that broken, doggerel metre, which is named after him, and which seems with its boisterous, clamorous movement to be more fitted for Jack Pudding at a fair than for the courtier-laureate. Yet its short, but variable, rhyming couplets, anarchic though they be, have a real rhythm in them, that marks a distinct advance on the pedantic discordance of contemporary serious poetry. Here at any rate were lines that chanted themselves, though their

melody was harsh and rude. The matter, too, has its interest, which is increased by its very vulgarity. We have a chance, one imagines, of knowing what the vulgar thought in 1520.

Skelton's list of enormities is long. He accuses the seculars of incontinence and ignorance. He complains of the oppressive wealth of the upper clergy:

What care they though Gil sweate,  
Or Jacke of the Noke?  
The pore people they yoke  
With sommons and citacyons  
And excommunycacyons,  
About churches and market:  
The bysshop on his carpet  
At home full softe dothe syt.

Then the encroachments of the Friars on the parsons' duties, the poverty and vagabondage of the monks, and of the nuns of dissolved houses are made the butt of his vituperative style. He insists on the unpopularity of the Church and the worldliness of the prelates. These attacks are all the more interesting because they partly anticipate those which were to be made later, when the divorce question and the revolt from the Papacy, both as yet undreamed of, came up<sup>1</sup>. They may

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the attack on tippling, ignorant parsons, lines 222—286, with Cromwell's Injunctions 1536, §§ 6 and 7; that on simony 291—302 with the Petition of the Commons 1532, Sect. vii; lines 323—8 (quoted above) with *id.* iii, iv; the description of the monks who "synge from place to place, like apostataas" with the Preamble of the Act for the Dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries 1536, "a great multitude of the religious persons in such small houses do...choose to rove abroad in apostasy." It is

be false or slanderous; but if the government found it hard to force their utterance on respectable Parliament-men, they were at least ready to its hand in the talk of the people.

Skelton did not stop at abusing the prelates in general. Some of the shafts in *Colin Clout* are distinctly aimed at their head, Cardinal Wolsey. What ground of quarrel the poet had with a man he had formerly flattered is not known. In any case he appeals to popular prejudices. The bishops are too secular; their very tapestries, *horribile dictu*, are adorned with heathen subjects, such as the triumph of Caesar.

Nowe truly, to my thynkyng,  
That is a speculacyon  
And a mete meditacyon  
For prelates of estate,  
Their courage to abate  
From worldly wantonnesse,  
Theyr chambres thus to dresse  
With suche parfettesse  
And all suche holynesse;  
Howbeit they let downe fall  
Their churches cathedrall.

We are reminded of Mantegna's series, the Triumph of Caesar, at Hampton Court.

A less oblique attack on the Cardinal in the same poem brings us to another notable point on which Skelton expresses the feelings of his contemporaries.

curious that Skelton seems to attribute the last scandal to the action of the Bishops in dissolving various monasteries, and to glance at Wolsey's policy of dissolution from 1524 on. With the reference (l. 989) to a "Quenes jellynge," it suggests the poem was at least revised after 1527.

It is a besy thyng  
 For one man to rule a kyng  
 Alone and make rekenyng,  
 To govern over all  
 And rule a realme royall  
 By one mannes verray wyt.

The national grievances against Wolsey were four. He was a courtier, a churchman, low-born, and chief minister. The first two defects have been enough dwelt on. That he was low-born was a crime in itself to Englishmen, although he probably added to the offence by using too fully the magnificence of his office, much as if a man should wear at the same time collar and ribbon of the Garter, to both of which a knight of the order is entitled. But the prejudice in favour of high birth and local influence was too strong to be eradicated even by the sufferings of the past century. Men wished that the nobles should be tamed, but they would not realize that it was needful at first to find other instruments to govern with, if the baronial prepotency was not to revive. Indeed the liking for an aristocratic government has been a permanent phenomenon since in English politics.

Still more hated was Wolsey's position as chief minister, another secular bugbear of Englishmen. Not only did he bear the burden of Henry VIII's sins, but it was not till the days of the younger Pitt that the nation would willingly accept a single confidant of the Crown. When Skelton, after imprisonment, returned to the attack in *Why come*

*ye not to Court?* he made this the great point of his indictment—in a rude fury which shows him at his best.

He is set so hye  
In his ierarchy  
Of frantyeke frenesy  
And folysshe fantasy,  
That in the Chambre of Starres  
All maters there he marres;  
Clappyng his rod on the borde,  
No man dare speke a worde,  
For he hathe all the sayenge,  
Without any renayenge;  
He rolleth in his recordes,  
He sayth, How saye ye, my lordes?  
Is nat my reason good?  
Good evyn, good Robyn Hood!  
Some say yes, and some  
Syt styll as they were dom:  
Thus thwartying over thom,  
He ruleth all the roste  
With braggyng and with bost.

Then the scandal of an upstart hectoring the once great lords of the realm, now impoverished and helpless against the Crown, stirs him to fresh objurgations.

Our barons be so bolde,  
Into a mouse hole they wolde  
Rynne away and crepe;  
Lyke a mayny of shepe,  
Dare not loke out at dur  
For drede of the mastyve cur,  
For drede of the bochers dogge  
Wold wyrry them lyke an hogge.  
For and this curre do gnar,  
They must stande all afar,  
To hold up their hande at the bar,  
For all their noble blode.  
He pluckes them by the hode,  
And shakes them by the eare,  
And brynges them in suche feare;  
He bayteth them lyke a bere,

Lyke an oxe or a bull:  
 Theyr wyttes, he saith, are dull;  
 He sayth they have no brayne  
 Theyr astate to mayntayne;  
 And maketh them to bow theyr kne  
 Before his majeste.

These turbulent lines surely give us some idea of the man and the time. We seem to see Skelton leaning over the sanctuary wall and hooting his oppressor as he rides attended by the abject baronage. And the vividness of the picture makes some amends for the squalor, which is always present in Skelton's writings, as in his life; a reminder maybe that the sixteenth-century court had stains and dust enough hidden under its arras-hangings: Spenser's half-ruinous palace of *Lucifera* was no bad image of contemporary splendour.

All the hinder parts, that few could spie,  
 Were ruinous and old, but painted cunningly.

From this plebeian rudesby it is necessary to turn for a brief space to two other worthies of Henry VIII's court, men of gentle blood these, who had undergone the influence of the Italian Renaissance. They did not indeed write political satire, they hardly wrote social satire: but it was their good fortune to rescue English verse from its fifteenth century slough. In this way they fixed the conditions under which later English poetry existed, including of course its satiric off-shoots. It was no great individual merit perhaps. A man of birth and breeding, travelled and with a literary

bent, like the Earl of Surrey, could not have found it so difficult to appreciate the harmony and beauty of Italian verse, or to understand the metrical rules on which it was based. A certain modicum of inspiration and an ear for verse were likewise needful for successful imitation, and Surrey, though but a minor poet after all, was sufficiently inspired. His great reform lay in scanning by the syllables in a line of verse, not by the rhythmical beats. Chaucer, in fact, had done much the same, but allowed more licences in construction. By this reform melody was once more made possible, as well as the effective interplay of the structure of the sentence and that of the verse, which had been barely attainable in the ancient accentual metres at their best. Thus through the infinite variety of poetical means now reobtained, it was feasible to develop poetical style. Had Chaucer's metres been understood, this movement would no doubt have been chiefly a harking back to the elder poet. As it was, though the new men felt his inspiration, his misread verse was a pitfall to them. He was made the authority for the cacophony of Barclay and his like.

The movement, as was natural and desirable, concerned more than metre alone; and here Wyatt, Surrey's elder contemporary, led the way. He imitated the Italians, and through them the classics, in matter and manner. Surrey followed his friend with more success. So now a trickling stream of Petrarchan sonnets begins to flow in England, soon

to become an immense, but shallow, flood. They do not, however, invade the present subject. As to that, the importance of the movement lies in the fact that the models of style and canons of taste were now chiefly to be found in Italian and ultimately in Latin authors. A certain studiousness and finesse, as well as a taste for rhetoric, takes the place of the simple air of Chaucer ; and a new, more charming pedantry supplants his : the "sentence" and its application of the Middle Ages give way to the allusion. Ideals of ornament in phrase change for the better ; and in more inward qualities one may observe that notions of the dignified and the poignant have been revised in view of the more civilized Italian works. Chaucer had, metaphorically speaking, been inclined to fall into a kind of goose-step when he wished to be stately, and to have recourse to "weylaweys" in order to be affecting. The Italians moved with a severe composure, not with such stilted expedients. Yet English literature never surrendered its individuality in these days. It retained the luxuriance which sprang from the national temper, and a northern burliness and heartiness, very different from the Italian *morbidezza*.

In the meantime, it may be noticed, something of the same process was gone through in Scotland. There, however, the language was more conservative : not all the inflexional syllables were clipped. In consequence, the tradition of Chaucer



was continued with little admixture of foreign elements, the later forms of words being accommodated readily enough to the Chaucerian metres. Among the Scottish writers was a really able satirist on the Protestant side in the Reformation struggle, Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount (1490—1555). A quotation from his *Complaint of the Papyngo* will show the old-fashioned excellence of his verse. And though he is in earnest he has caught the bantering tone of his model. The dying Papyngo is plagued by three clerical birds, the Pye, the Raven or Blackmonk, and the Gled or Friar : the Pye comes first :

I am, said he, one Chanoun regulare,  
 And of my brether Pryour principall;  
 My quhyte rocket, my clene life doith declare;  
 The blak bene of the deith memoriall;  
 Quharefor, I thynk your gudis naturall  
 Suld be submyttit hole into my cure;  
 Ye know I am ane holye creature.

The hendecasyllabic line of Chaucer is now decasyllabic ; the final “e”s are silent : but the manner and rhythm follow the master pretty closely, although the shorter words cause some approximation to those of the new English metres. The Italian style does not exist for Lyndsay.

The strife between the old faith and the new raged as long and as bitterly in England as in Scotland, but it did not so easily or so soon find poetical expression. The causes of this phenomenon were various. Partly, the nation was, as we have seen, chiefly concerned with practical abuses and

vexations, the ancestors of the famous tithe-pig which cut so prominent a figure in the days of the philosophic Radicals. Partly, it was inclined to follow, somewhat sheepishly, the lead of its autocrats. But the main reason doubtless lay in the autocrats themselves. No rulers better understood the value of public opinion than the Tudors, or the need of securely controlling that demonic force. Hence, whatever opinion the prince adopted, the propaganda of its contrary was at once proscribed, while all the official machinery was employed in its favour. Such an atmosphere was not favourable for productions of laboured art. Who knew what conviction the morrow might bring forth? And in point of fact more homely means, sermons, speeches, disputations, and the like were more useful and went more speedily the round of the country.

Among these implements of despotism were the ballads. They had the defect, however, of being hard to control. Hence in them we have the statements of the vanquished as well as those of the victors. Edward VI, one sees, unloosed theological dispute. So the subject-matter of the ballads is changed from that of the old ecclesiastical satires. It is doctrines which engage their attention; we hear of authority versus individual judgment. This may be seen from a Protestant one, the *Ballad of Luther, the Pope, a Cardinal and a Husband-man*, written under Edward VI. The Pope is made to say:

Thou stryvest against my purgatory,  
 Because thou findest it not in scripture;  
 As though I by myne auctoritie  
 Myght not make one for myne honoure.  
 Knowest thou not, that I have power  
 To make and mar, in heaven and hell,  
 In earth and every creature?  
 Whatsoever I do it must be well.

There is a neat turn of exaggeration here. Good, however, as its humorous irony is, it is surpassed as an imaginative work of art by the Catholic ballad of *Little John Nobody*, as may be seen :

Little John Nobody, quoth I, what news? Thou soon note  
 and tell

What maner men thou meane, thou are so mad.  
 He said, these gay gallants, that will construe the gospel,  
 As Solomon the sage, with semblance full sad;  
 To discusse divinity they nought adread;  
 More meet it were for them to milk kye at a fleyke.  
 Thou liest, quoth I, thou losel, like a leud lad.  
 He said; he was little John Nobody that durst not speake.

If thou company with them they will currishly carp, and not  
 care

According to their foolish fantasy, but fast will they naught;  
 Prayer with them is but prating; therefore they it forbear:  
 Both alms-deeds and holiness, they hate it in their thought:  
 Therefore pray we to that prince, that with his blood us  
 bought,

That he will mend that is amiss: for many a manful freyke  
 Is sorry for these sects, though they say little or naught;  
 And that I, little John Nobody, dare not once speake.

How happily the conservative metre, not far from *Piers the Plowman's* rhymed, agrees with the conservative utterance of the poem ! And the refrain, —to be silent was the only alternative to supporting the Tudors. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that political poems were not written.

On one occasion, however, the autocrat herself helped to fill the blank. Henry VIII, though literary, had preferred theology to verse ; but his daughter once and again wooed Melpomene, who, to tell the truth in Elizabethan phrase, rather fled at the Amazon's approach. It seems to have been just after Norfolk's plot in favour of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1571-2, that Elizabeth wrote her political verses. They must be cited in full if only for their authoress :

The dread of future foes exiles my present joy,  
And wit me warns to shun such snares as threaten mine  
    anoy.

For falsehood now doth flow and subjects' faith doth ebb;  
Which would not be if Reason ruled, or Wisdom weaved  
    the web.

But clouds of toys untried do cloak aspiring minds,  
Which turn to rain of late repent by course of changéd  
    winds.

The top of hope supposed the root of ruth will be,  
And fruitless all their grafféd guiles, as shortly ye shall see.  
Those dazzled eyes with pride, which great ambition blinds,  
Shall be unseal'd by worthy wights whose foresight false-  
    hood finds.

The Daughter of Debate, that eke discord doth sow,  
Shall reap no gain where former rule hath taught still  
    peace to grow.

No foreign banish'd wight shall anchor in this port;  
Our realm it brooks no stranger's force, let them elsewhere  
    resort.

Our rusty sword with rest shall first its edge employ,  
To poll their tops that seek such change and gape for joy.

These are fine, imperious lines for all their distorted syntax and clumsy metre. It is a born ruler who speaks, and one who knew the foundations of her power—"where former rule hath taught still peace to grow."

The rule of the great autocratic house was now to bear its fruits in the creation of modern England and of modern English literature. The entrance of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, which in this country had its chief predominance after the separation from Rome and contemporaneously with the further progress of the Reformation, supplied new forms of beauty, new thoughts, new hopes, new desires to be embodied in literature. The New World now lay open to mankind, and the northern island, undistracted by religious wars under the strong rule of Elizabeth, undebauched by antinomianism like Italy, unspoilt by too secure possession like Spain and Portugal, found at once an outlet for and an extraordinary stimulus to its energies. Of this expansion in enterprise, in thought and in character, the Queen was the presiding genius. With all her faults, not only did she seek peace and ensue it, not only did she protect the normal development of her people, but she had a wonderful power of calling out latent force and of inspiring a national ideal. In a land under a popular autocracy, where the court was all in all, there is no need to dwell on the epoch-making importance of the lead she gave. There was a kind of fervour of movement in progress : men left the old restricted paths of hamlet and town,

Some to discover islands far away,  
Some to the studious universities,

and on this stir of existence the "mortal moon"  
cast a fickle, yet a magic, light.

Of the new court literature the greatest, if not the earliest, name in poetry is that of Spenser (1552—1599). The feeble tentatives of such men as Wyatt and Surrey were now succeeded by the inspired work of a poetic genius, by whom for the first time the thorough melody of verse and the full resources of style were employed in English. This is not the place, however, to discuss the general merits and defects of Spenser, “moving through his clouded heaven, With the moon’s beauty and the moon’s soft pace,”—his delicate loveliness, his high-mindedness, his harmony, or, on the other hand, his archaisms, his languid prolixity and his want of humour. We are concerned only with that small part of his work which can be interpreted as political satire. Yet in that part his position with regard to later writings is much the same as in his finer compositions. He uses the types of subsequent methods and styles of satire in a less specialized form than after-writers. Mockery, denunciation and depreciatory narrative are all there. So, too, he is a learned satirist, looking back to earlier poets, and directing the development of art for posterity.

The last characteristic is very marked in the *Shepherd’s Calendar* (1579), where he combines the Chaucerian and the Vergilian traditions. Neither influence was without its ill-effects. The misread Chaucerian verse makes him often scan by the four stress-beats in the line of nine or ten syllables, and though his ear saved him from any

discordance, the over-emphasis, necessary for the accents, renders the verse monotonous and limits the expressiveness of the style. It goes best, I think, with the happy lilt describing rustic gaieties in the days of Catholicism:

Youghthes folke now flocken in every where,  
 To gather May bus-kets and smelling brere:  
 And home they hasten the postes to dight,  
 And all the Kirke pillours eare day light,  
 With Hawthorne buds, and swete Eglantine,  
 And girlonds of roses, and Sopps in wine.

Then the Vergilian influence makes him select the Pastoral Eclogue for his subject, and although, with regard to the pretty, fanciful poetry it produces, his choice is not to be regretted, it ruins the satiric parts to have theologians grotesquely garbed in sheepskin and discussing their differences with a marvellous affectation of pedantic ignorance. Spenser's heart was in the Protestant cause, but the fact did not greatly aid his verse. Here is his criticism of the Papist clergy abroad:

The shepheardes swayne you cannot wel ken,  
 But it be by his pryde, from other men:  
 They looken bigge as Bulls that bene bate,  
 And bearen the cragge so stiffe and so state,  
 As cocke on his dunghill crowing cranck.

For the rest he could not help showing he was a great poet, though here dreary in a way that is not usual with him.

But little later than the *Shepherd's Calendar* Spenser seems to have written a purely satiric poem, *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, though it was published and probably revised after some years

had elapsed. This is a kind of fable, in which not only the influence of Chaucer, but that of Lyndsay and of the beast-tales of Reynard the Fox are to be seen. The metre consists of the heroic rhymed couplets, which were to become the classic medium for English satire. Spenser's management of this verse, though he was almost a pioneer, excels that of most of his successors. Discreetly varied, avoiding the perpetual isolated couplet with its limited rhythms which was to culminate with Pope, but at the same time well-knit and far from the straggling and involved composition of most of his followers, his lines swing along with a free athletic movement. He had much success, too, with his subject-matter, and came, perhaps, as near as any one to using the beast-fable concerning purely human doings with propriety of incident and treatment.

The Ape and the Fox set out to gain their living by knavish means, and in the course of their adventures a good number of social abuses are exposed by the poet. The sturdy rogue, the simoniac parson, the baser type of courtier are all satirized with an ironical humour one would barely expect in Spenser. For instance the parson cannot read manuscript or write :

Of such deep learning little had he neede,  
 Ne yet of Latine, ne of Greeke, that breede  
 Doubts mongst Divines, and difference of texts,  
 From whence arise diversitie of sects,  
 And hatefull heresies, of God abhor'd :  
 But this good Sir did follow the plaine word,  
 Ne medled with their controversies vaine.



But besides these general descriptions there is also a chief incident which savours of a more personal enmity. The Ape with the Fox's help steals the Lion's skin, and sets up as king with his partner as prime minister. Now the Fox's misdeeds are those which might be charged against Lord Burleigh. He provides for his offspring:

He fed his cubs with fat of all the soyle,  
And with the sweate of others sweating toyle;  
He crammed them with crumbs of benefices,  
And fild their mouths with meeds of malefices:  
He cloathed them with all colours, save white,  
And loded them with lordships and with might,  
So much as they were able well to beare,  
That with the weight their backs nigh broken were.

He builds as Burleigh did; he shares Burleigh's dislike for war and unpractical scholarship:

Of men of armes he had but small regard,  
But kept them lowe, and streigned very hard.  
For men of learning little he esteemed;  
His wisdom he above their learning deemed.

When we remember that Spenser was a *protégé* of Leicester, who never saw eye to eye with the Treasurer, that he makes similar allusions undoubtedly to Burleigh in later poems, and that Burleigh was his constant enemy, this seems significant enough, especially as we only have the last draft of the poem and probably the most cautious. The famous lines on the miseries of a suitor at court are commonly considered a later insertion; but it is also to be noticed that the metrification of its couplets is in the regular Italian and French decasyllabic form, whereas

when Spenser writes in what he thought Chaucer's heroic couplet in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, he uses the four accents in a nine- or ten-syllabled line. *Mother Hubbard's Tale* being a youthful composition, this fact suggests that the whole was rehandled and the lines were filled up to a regular decasyllabic metre. But if Burleigh was the Fox, who can have been the Ape, the travelled knavish courtier? It is tempting to see in him the French envoy Simier, who in 1579 came to court to woo the Queen by deputy for the Duke of Alençon. He was received with great favour; the match seemed decided on; and the Council, including Burleigh, resigned themselves to supporting it. One can well imagine the indignation of the favourite Leicester, and we know the fear it excited in the kingdom, lest the Lion were beguiled of her virgin sovranty. In any case the poem was frowned on, and only published, perhaps, as I have hinted, in a less pungent form, in 1591.

Spenser did not abandon contemporary politics in his later verse, but in the references to state-affairs in the *Faerie Queene* he is always the ardent partisan of the royal policy. These references only appear in the last three books, published in 1595, and deal mostly with the great religious wars then raging. The best of them attack Mary Queen of Scots under the name of Duessa, who in the first three books had typified false Christianity and especially the Church of Rome.

Then was there brought, as prisoner to the barre,  
 A Ladie of great countenance and place,  
 But that she it with foule abuse did marre;  
 Yet did appeare rare beautie in her face,  
 But blotted with condition vile and base,  
 That all her other honour did obscure,  
 And titles of nobilitie deface:  
 Yet in that wretched semblant she did sure  
 The peoples great compassion unto her allure.

She is tried before Elizabeth, here named Mercilla,  
 and accused by Zeal. Her sins are not forgotten:

Then brought he forth with griesly grim aspect  
 Abhorred Murder, who, with bloudie knyfe  
 Yet dropping fresh in hand, did her detect,  
 And there with guiltie bloodshed charged ryfe:  
 Then brought he forth Sedition, breeding stryfe  
 In troublous wits, and mutinous uprore:  
 Then brought he forth Incontinence of lyfe,  
 Even foule Adulterie her face before,  
 And lewd Impietie, that her accused sore.

Mercilla suspends judgment till "strong constraint" forces her to condemn her rival. There is much excellence of art about all this, but few, I think, would not prefer the less pamphleteering cantos.

We next have the revolt of the Dutch against Philip II under the names of Belgae and Gerioneo, then Henry IV's reconciliation to Rome and the close of the French Civil War, then an idealized version of Arthur Lord Grey's campaigns in Ireland. All of these incidents have their merits as romantic tales, even if they are not among the best in the *Faerie Queene*. As satires they are hopelessly unreal: they are not pungent, although they do some service in making the side the poet espoused attractive. So far as Spenser was con-

cerned, we feel that these historic episodes were not his natural haunts, not the

magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

The dramatists of the age also made incursions into the realm of politics from time to time ; but they were usually discreet enough to deal only with the past, and then chiefly with a view to dramatic situations. Magna Carta is never mentioned in Shakespeare's *King John*. On the other hand a piece like Marlowe's *Massacre of Paris* dealing with foreign affairs can be outspoken on the subject of the enemies of the English state. We might, too, put down Shakespeare's delineations of the mob to satire, but they are rather part of the social picture he gives us.

Indeed, if politics are of rare occurrence in the Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry, social satire was not uncommon. We have Gascoigne, who wrote in blank verse, Spenser, Lodge, Drayton, Wither and others, while the plays of course frequently have satiric passages. Two authors may be specially mentioned for their more original form. Joseph Hall (1574—1656), Bishop of Norwich, published his satires in 1597. He claimed to be the first to attempt the kind of writing in England, and this is true in so far as he was the first studiously to imitate the Latin satirists. It is noticeable that for his half-rhetorical purpose he made his couplets somewhat more epigrammatic in form ; the sen-

tences overflow into the next couplet much less often than Spenser's. Yet this method of writing heroic decasyllabics was not so unusual in sententious passages. Mr Courthope has said that he suffered from the fact that there was not enough refined vice in England for him to denounce. But his rival, Marston (1575—1674), the playwright, overcame this difficulty by overcharging his pictures with reckless abuse. The latter's mouthing exaggerations were castigated by his contemporaries : yet their virulence of tone and air of lofty impeccable indignation were not soon to desert English satire. For himself, he was merely scurrilous : the young bloods of 1600 were not the equals of their elders.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTY-SATIRE

The "good obedience" which her subjects yielded to Elizabeth began to fall away after the defeat of the Armada. The nation enjoyed a new sense of security and needed less the guidance of an autocrat. The Queen herself was growing old, and was slowly losing touch with the new generation. More than all, the "people," the classes of political importance, had changed. Squire and merchant had been thoroughly drilled in local self-government by the Tudors. Their position as crown-officials, chosen for their local influence, made them a different political force from either the aristocracy or the bureaucracy of France, where the policy of the Crown was to divorce the nobles from power in their districts and make officialdom solely dependent on the central authority. True the Tudors from the beginning had rested, not on a military force which they did not possess, but on the voluntary obedience of the upper classes; but in 1500 those classes were a frightened mob,

clinging desperately to the strong race which could save them, and desperately afraid of their preservers. In 1600 they were self-confident, used to govern and consult together, equipped with traditions of public and private life, and individually keenly susceptible to a public opinion which could even express itself in Parliament under all the disadvantage in which that fleeting body stood in respect to the Crown.

The accession of James I was itself a shock to the royal power. The king was a foreigner, a Scot, and his rule was mistrusted from the first as such. Nor did he hold the reins with the deft despotic hands of Elizabeth. The system of the Tudors soon began to decay as his reign went on. From criticism and protest Parliament proceeded to claims for an active share in the government. A permanent estrangement set in between the royal house and the Commons; and under Charles I rapid progress was made towards a revolution.

Besides those grounds of dispute which concerned the limits of the royal prerogative, the rights of Parliament and the liberties of the subject, one principal cause of discord lay in the Elizabethan religious settlement and in its developments under the Stewarts. The Queen, by a judicious mixture of goading and curbing, had succeeded in obtaining a considerable acquiescence in her insular, reformed, but conservative church. She had reduced the Catholics to an impotent and

persecuted minority ; but the advanced reformers, the Puritans, she had found harder to check. After her death definitely Puritan views gained ground among the country-gentry and the townsmen, till in 1640 they could obtain the suffrage of the majority in the House of Commons. For our special purpose we may omit the more speculative points on which there were differences of opinion. In external matters the Puritans were advocates of a simpler ceremonial and a new system of church-government. They wished for presbyteries and synods to replace episcopacy, and they were no friends of the Royal Supremacy. At the same time there was a strong minority in Parliament which would approve the existing ecclesiastical system, though not perhaps in favour of all Archbishop Laud's innovations. Both these church-parties of course were for enforcing conformity according to their own views in the national church, for toleration was an idea as yet barely broached in England ; and the question was complicated by the slow rise of Puritan Sectaries, whose doctrines would be regarded as heretical by either leading section of opinion. As may be supposed, the religious quarrel embittered every secular dispute, and eventually exacerbated party-feeling to the extent of civil war.

While this state of religious and political tension existed in England, Charles quarrelled with the Scots over another form of the same ecclesias-



tical controversy, and was worsted in the Second Bishops' War. In 1640 the Long Parliament met, and the despotism which Tudors and Stewarts had exercised came to its end. Parliament had the King at its mercy, for the victorious Scots were encamped for some months in the North and money had to be supplied according to the Treaty of Ripon in order to furnish monthly payments to them.

At first there was a fairly general agreement. Few desired a renewal of Charles' absolute government. The extensions of the Prerogative under the Tudors went by the board. But when Parliament came to deal with religious matters, a split occurred. Besides a certain number, who supported the Church's system and doctrines as understood by Archbishop Laud, there was a large party of moderate men who were by no means anxious to abolish the bishops completely and establish undiluted Presbyterianism. They were barely outnumbered by the thorough-going Puritans in the Commons, and with them as supporters the King had a considerable party. As event followed event through the winter of 1641-2, it was these men, such as Falkland and Hyde, who were content with the work the Long Parliament had already done and resisted the Puritan majority which wished to go further, both in church-matters and in restricting the royal power. So when the Civil War that had so long been brewing began, the

opposing parties were formed largely on religious grounds. The lines of civil and ecclesiastical division had become identical. It was King and Bishops against Parliament and Presbyteries ; and the lesser sections of opinion were either absorbed by or grouped around these protagonists.

A good deal of Puritan feeling during these eventful years may be gathered from two Puritan poets, Milton and the lesser light, Wither, just as the episcopalian, Cavalier side is taken by Cleveland. Milton's contribution to the dispute, however, was almost wholly made in prose and falls outside the limits of the present essay. In his poetry we have only the reference in *Lycidas* to the Laudian clergy and one sonnet. About *Lycidas* it is of course impossible to say anything new. Like Spenser's *Calendar* its satire is handicapped by the pastoral convention ; but the magic of Milton's style, exceeding that of any other English poet, the beauty of the several images and the moral grandeur of the conceptions, make us forget all inconsistency and incongruity : St Peter among gods and learned shepherds is still impressive. After all, perhaps, there was an artistic harmony governing the bizarre pastoral world and Milton found it.

The poet, however, by 1646 had gone further in his views than the majority of Parliamentary Puritans. He had become the champion of free thought and a free press, and, himself a sectary, of toleration in religion. Parliament, to please its

Scotch allies, had enforced the taking of the Covenant, and was still eagerly intent on exacting a Calvinistic conformity. Milton does not seem to have despaired of the Commons, but with regard to his theological opponents his wrath knew no bounds. He breaks out in a famous sonnet against the Presbyterian divines, one of the few written in English after the satiric *codato* model. One tyranny had been exchanged for another, he says.

New presbyter is but old priest writ large.

One must admit that however fine the rugged vigour of this sonnet may be, it is a very small stone beside the others in his diadem.

Far more—in his lower world—is the same kind of criticism true of Wither (1586—1667). An author of charming lyric poems, on his conversion to Puritanism he took to writing continual verse on political subjects. He started with an immense rhymed tract, *Britain's Remembrancer*, in 1628, on the sins of the nation ; and maundered on, poor man, for some thirty years with barely a break on the same subject. Not a public event could pass without renewing the visitation of this *cacoethes scribendi*, and in his character of a chosen vessel his utterances were of course mainly concerned with reproof, and so to a certain extent satiric. Yet this crank was an honest, fair-minded man, most unmalicious in temperament ; and by a fortunate consequence his lucubrations have much less to do with our subject than might be expected. He was

for toleration and moderate counsels, a sober Cromwellian. And he writes sound sense amid his eternal preaching. Here is his comment (*What Peace to the Wicked?*) in 1648, when Army, Parliament, King of Scots, were all at loggerheads. The war, rooting up old landmarks as it did, had favoured the formation of an immense variety of opinions in all departments of life and polity. It had also created the professional soldier.

If waste Jerusalem was made,  
Who therein but three factions had;  
This Island, how may we deplore,  
Wherein are three times three or more?  
Some with the Parliament partake;  
Some with the King a party make,  
As he is King; and some, that he  
A Tyrant might become to be;  
Some would a Popular Estate;  
Some, Aristocracy create:  
Some, are a faction for the Pope,  
Some to maintain the Prelates hope;  
Some for the Presbyterians vote;  
Some Independency promote;  
Some strive for this and some for that,  
Some neither know nor care for what,  
So wars go on, and get they may  
Free Quarter, Plunder and their Pay.

At the end of this composition he writes, "Take this and consider of it till more comes." More came. Even after the Restoration he addressed a tract, only recently published, to Clarendon, *Vox vulgi* (just what it was not); and here again we have a doggerel sermon, with sound sense at bottom and once or twice a flash of life in its style. He reproves the intolerant Cavalier Parliament:

...you are such  
Quick-witted things, we hear, as have not been  
In any British Parliament yet seen;  
For, whereas they consumed much time in stating  
What was to them proposed and in debating,  
You at first hearing could without dispute  
All arguments with noise alone confute,  
And absolutely be resolvéd too  
In hardest matters that ye list to do  
In spite of reason.

The sermon, however, passed unheeded, like his others, and it would not be easy to find an author who had less effect on his times or in literature. His very life was spared, when captured by the Royalists, on Denham's mocking plea: "While Wither lived, he could not be the worst poet in England."

In his literary aspect Wither was a man of the old world. John Cleveland (1613-58) helped to bring about a new. The situation after 1640 with its clearly marked issues cried for a party-satirist in verse, but Milton and Wither stood aloof from strict parties. A swarm of ballad writers filled the gap; yet they were feeble and vulgar for the most part: and Cleveland stands pre-eminent as a satirist of real distinction and originality, the founder of a new department in English literature. He is the first English writer of partisan verse, purely political in his aims, and devoting his compositions to a studious attack on the other party in the state.

A Cambridge Fellow, he early took up with the Royalist and anti-Presbyterian side, and one of

his most amusing sallies is on the subject of the hated *Et caetera* oath to maintain Episcopacy, which there was an attempt to enforce on the clergy and universities in 1640. Two Zealots discuss the matter ; and one declares :

I say to the *Et caetera*, thou ly'st,  
Thou art the curléd lock of Antichrist;  
Rubbish of Babel; for who will not say  
Tongues are confounded in *Et caetera*?  
Who swears *Et caetera*, swears more oaths at once  
Than Cerberus out of his triple scone.  
Who views it well with the same eye beholds  
The old, false serpent in his numerous folds.

We have here the main characteristics of Cleveland, the somewhat harsh verse, the whimsical learning, which approaches the obscure, and above all the rapid volley of abusive wit, increasing the ridicule by the very jostling of the images. Thus Cleveland and his school obtained a "higher power" of that contrast of incongruities and that surprise which go so far to make up wit.

As time went on Cleveland was ejected from his fellowship and joined the King at Oxford. His tone became bitterer as may be seen in the *Hue and Cry after Sir John Presbyter*.

What zealous Phrenzy did the Senate seize,  
That tore the rochet to such rags as these?  
Episcopacy minced; reforming Tweed  
Has sent us runts, even of her Church's breed.

Sure they're the antic heads, which, placed without  
The Church, do gape and disembody a spout:  
Like them about the Commons' House t'have been  
So long without, now both are gotten in.

There is a kind of triumphant scorn in this, such

as we can imagine the scholar Cleveland felt for Presbyterian Wither. But he betters his work in his finest satire, *The Rebel Scot*. The Scots were not only the cause of the King's mischief and the main props of Presbyterianism; they were hated by the English as Scots; and Cleveland with his fiery, frank nature, was just the man to express the combined feelings.

How! Providence! and yet a Scottish crew?  
 Then Madam Nature wears black patches too.  
 What! shall our nation be in bondage thus  
 Unto a land that truckles under us?<sup>1</sup>  
 Ring the bells backward! I am all on fire;  
 Not all the buckets in a country choir  
 Shall quench my rage. A poet should be fear'd,  
 When angry, like a comet's flaming beard.  
 And where's the Stoic can his wrath appease  
 To see his country sick of Pym's disease;  
 By Scotch invasion to be made a prey  
 To such Pig-widgin Myrmidons as they?

The Scotch alliance of course was the great device by which Pym prepared to redress the balance of the war in 1643. The price paid was the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant by Parliament and the disbursing of heavy subsidies. Cleveland proceeds in an hyperbole of depreciation and scorn, in which as in his other methods of satire he set the fashion for a generation :

Nature herself does Scotchmen Beasts confess,  
 Making their country such a wilderness;  
 A land that brings in question and suspense  
 God's omnipresence, but that Charles came thence;  
 But that Montross and Crawford's royal band  
 Atoned their sin and christen'd half their land.

<sup>1</sup> Does this refer to the truckle-bed of the scholar kept under that of the Fellow in the College Dormitories?

Nor is it all the nation hath these spots;  
 There is a Church as well as Kirk of Scots,  
 As in a picture where the squinting paint  
 Shows fiend on this side and on that side saint<sup>1</sup>.  
 He that saw Hell in's melancholy dream,  
 And in the twilight of his fancy's theme  
 Scared from his sins, repented in a fright,  
 Had he view'd Scotland, had turn'd proselyte.  
 A land where one may pray with curst intent:  
 O may they never suffer banishment!  
 Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom,  
 Not forced him wander, but confined him home.  
 Like Jews they spread and as infection fly,  
 As if the Devil had ubiquity.  
 Hence 'tis they live at rovers and defy  
 This or that place, rags of geography.  
 They're citizens o' th' world, they're all in all;  
 Scotland's a nation epidemical.

Was it for this you left your leaner soil,  
 Thus to lard Israel with Egypt's spoil?  
 They are the Gospel's Life-guard; but for them  
 (The garrison of new Jerusalem)  
 What would the Brethren do? The Cause! The Cause!  
 Sack-possets and the fundamental laws!

It has been said<sup>2</sup> that the compression of a separate scoff into almost every couplet produces a strained effect; yet the style after all needs this rapid movement, the individual witticisms not being substantial enough to stand alone. It is with no surprise we hear that Cleveland was a witty companion. His verses sound like a string of repartees, and trace their origin to Biron in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The man is pretty obvious in his rhymes. We have the student from the University with his medley of quaint, ill-assorted

<sup>1</sup> Picture on a grooved board, showing a different head according to whether it is looked at from the left or right, not uncommon in North Italy for saints, etc.

<sup>2</sup> By Prof. Courthope.



learning, scholastic and Biblical. These were the days before specialization, but nevertheless, what a richly-furnished learning flourished then, when Milton was *primus inter pares*! Cleveland, however, can hardly be called a great writer. He had very little artistic power or ear for verse. His imagination did not suffice to complete any image. It would be useless to look for reasoning or thought in him. In wit he was quite inferior to his successors, Butler or Marvell: his sarcasms are mere savage quips. But he set the fashion and has made himself a name.

Both Cleveland and Wither, so different in character and writings, had one common peculiarity. They belonged to special sections of society, and are almost too typical and pronounced in mental feature to represent England at large, although the circumstance does not detract much from their influence. For more usual ways of thought we must look elsewhere, and fortunately, as far as politics go, we have various satiric ballads to our hand. The authors of these compositions were often men of some celebrity—Cleveland himself wrote ballads,—but they were meant for street corners and appeal solely to the vulgar. Two characters mark them off at once from serious satire. First, their tone, manner and feeling, some coarseness excepted, are less archaic to us than those of more dignified contemporary works. The general temperament of Englishmen has been a more

constant factor than the finest fruits of their genius under the special training of each age would lead us to believe. Secondly, while the religious controversy is all in all for Cleveland in his more literary vein at least, in the ballads we do not hear much even of high politics. Quite early, it is true, there are some wretched ballads (1625-8) directed against Buckingham's ascendancy over Charles I, but when we come to the final contest it is such subjects as taxes, the hated excise, governmental corruption, the confiscation of the Cavaliers' estates, and the suppression of the familiar Common Prayer, that we find most satirized under the Commonwealth, and as Cromwell's rule wears out and the Restoration is in sight, the loathing of the army breaks out more and more.

The best of the ballad-writers is Alexander Brome (1620-66). He chiefly, however, wrote Bacchanalian songs with a slight Cavalier qualification added to the wine, something in the style of Wildrake in Scott's *Woodstock*. Only every now and then he becomes more political. One occasion was furnished him in 1648-9 by the King's execution and the establishment of the Commonwealth. [The Lower House was purged of its Presbyterian members by Colonel Pryde, King and Lords were abolished, and the sectarian Rump of the Commons started to govern with the support of the Army. These revolutionary proceedings were satirized by Brome in his *Levellers' Rant*, in

which the Cavalier poet chose to identify the army-officers in power with the extremer fanatics, the Levellers.

To the hall, to the hall,  
For justice we call,  
On the King and his powerful adherents and friends,  
Who still have endeavour'd, but we work their ends.  
'Tis we that pull down whate'er is above us,  
And make them to fear us that never did love us.  
We'll level the proud and make every degree  
To our royalty bow the knee.  
'Tis no less than treason  
'Gainst freedom and reason  
For our brethren to be higher than we.

First the thing called a king  
To judgment we bring,  
And the spawn of the court, that were prouder than he;  
And next the two houses united shall be:  
It does to the Romish religion inveigle,  
For the state to be two-headed like the spread-eagle.  
We'll purge the superfluous members away;  
They are too many kings to sway,  
And as we all teach,  
'Tis our liberty's breach,  
For the free-born Saints to obey.

Not a claw in the law  
Shall keep us in awe  
We'll have no cushion-cuffers to tell us of Hell,  
For we are all gifted to do it as well.  
'Tis freedom that we do hold forth to the nation  
To enjoy our fellow-creatures as at the creation;  
The carnal men's wives are for men of the Spirit,  
Their wealth is our own by merit;  
For we, that have right  
By the law call'd might,  
Are the Saints that must judge and inherit.

It will be seen how much nearer than *The Rebel Scot* is this jovial burlesque to the political squibs of our own day. ] And it is very good, with its rushing swing and racy humour. Nor is it so

exaggerated as one would think. The genuine Levellers were communists; and there was always a certain antinomy among the Sectarians in general between a reign of democracy and a reign of the Saints, the Saints being of course themselves.

Few, if any, of the other ballads equal Brome's, but still there is humour and wit in plenty, that even now are not quite stale. Up to 1648 the Committee of the Commons which directed the administration is the chief butt. It was exasperating everybody with taxation and corruption, as well as by its endeavours "to purge the Church and wicked State." Then the death of Charles and the fall of the Presbyterians made Cromwell and the soldiers the bugbear of the nation. One poor, stagy ballad expresses a common feeling. The "people" address King Charles:

Meantime (thou glory of the earth)  
 We languishing do die:  
 Excise doth give free-quarter birth,  
 While soldiers multiply.  
 Our lives we forfeit every day,  
 Our money cuts our throats:  
 The laws are taken clean away,  
 Or shrunk to traitors' votes.

Cromwell answers "on the throne":

Like patient mules resolve to bear  
 Whate'er we shall impose.  
 Your lives and goods you need not fear;  
 We'll prove your friends, not foes.  
 We, the elected ones, must guide  
 A thousand years this land;  
 You must be props unto our pride  
 And slaves to our command.

In spite of the miserable quality of these lines they express pretty fairly the questions at issue. Of course Cromwell was a monster to the Royalists. Events, however, were taking a turn unfavourable to satire. In a few years the Rump itself shared the fate of the purged members, and Cromwell ruled as Protector to carry out the Army's policy. The military government which was necessary to keep down the unwilling kingdom, now almost unanimous for a Restoration of Charles II, made his rule hated still more. But it was becoming dangerous to speak under Cromwell's Major-Generals. Cleveland, though in an attractive incident he maintained an honourable frankness, was silent and ballad-writing died down. Besides, there was less to satirize in the proceedings of the new government which was efficient and successful at home and abroad, although its ways were stern.

Cromwell's death and the fall of the Protectorate both allowed satire to be published and gave it opportune material. The Rump, which no one respected, was soon restored to authority again, but subject in its exercise to the Army's whims. We can see how bitter Royalist feeling was from the following extracts, written in a then frequent form :

From dissembling presbyters and their plots,  
From English forty times worse than Scots,  
From those that for our estates cast lots,  
Libera nos, Domine!

. . . . .

From the City militia that stare like Hectors,  
 From such as are the state-projectors,  
 From taxes, redcoats and collectors,  
     Libera nos, Domine !

. . . . .  
 From dissembling sects and their goggle-eyes,  
 From believing of the printed lies,  
 From rogues and from re-publique spies,  
     Libera nos, Domine !

The ordinary Englishman had come to loathe the Commonwealth, with its exactions, its military tyranny, its religious busybodies, its instability. "From a Rump insatiate as the sea," says another *Litany*, "Libera nos, Domine !"

Better times were coming, and with the Restoration comes also a change of subject. First we have the jubilation over the vanquished, ballads on regicides, discharged redcoats, and fifth-monarchy men: but soon a note of discord enters. Ballads are now directed against the Court, and there is the due counter-attack on the Country-party by the other side, both steadily growing bitterer as the strife becomes that of Whig and Tory. Still no new genre is created; the old forms of Commonwealth satire continue. Indeed the whole species of writing is cast somewhat into the shade by the more literary form of satire, which drew its origin from Cleveland. The best ballad-writer, Marvell, made his mark chiefly in the more ambitious style. There is a certain dreariness, I think, in these fourth-rate compositions, in spite of their importance when we try to gauge popular feeling. Still

one mocking set of verses, *Royal Resolutions*, once wrongly attributed to Marvell, has some originality. Charles II speaks, all the gloss of Restoration gone:

I'll wholly abandon all public affairs,  
And pass all my time with buffoons and players,  
And saunter to Nelly when I should be at prayers.

I'll have a fine pond with a pretty decoy,  
Where many strange fowl shall feed and enjoy,  
And still in their language quack *Vive le Roi!*

This is Old Rowley in his habit as he lived.

If there is a slight degeneracy in ballad-writing, the reign of Charles II as a whole is the golden age of English political verse. The satire of the day shows moral as well as literary qualities of a high order. There are, as one might expect, developments in the state of politics and literature, which give us, so to speak, the suitable habitat wherein this great excellence might flourish, if they do not account for its appearance.

In politics we have the first stages in the growth of persistent self-conscious parties on secular grounds. Cavaliers and Roundheads never quite considered themselves such. In their religious capacity they belonged to one of the many opinions then prevalent, and religious truth, they said, was one; as secular statesmen they divided themselves into good men and true, and malignants, traitors, scoundrels and so forth. No doubt, party-feeling is always inclined to separate the sheep from the goats in this way; but proscription began to mean

a very different thing after the Restoration. This was partly due to the way in which Charles II's return came about. Episcopalians and Presbyterians combined to go back to the status of 1641 before the Civil War, accepting as legal all that was legally done, and trying to resolder tradition and present practice. This resolution, which, as much as one event can, has made England the land of precedent and slow development, had two further results of the first importance. The monarchy restored was not that of the Tudors, but that resulting from the Acts passed by the Long Parliament and accepted by Charles I in 1641; and as the two parties united to restore it, there could not but be two readings of the constitution. True, political privilege was confined to Anglicans by the Cavalier Parliament, but, what with conforming and laxity, the quondam Presbyterians retained their footing in public life. Each side might be anathematized by its rival, but it could not be expelled from all influence on the government as in past times. A weighty Parliamentary Opposition became a permanent factor in English politics. Nor were the combatants silent in the recess of Parliament: in spite of a stringent press-law, squibs, satires, pasquinades, and the heavier artillery of pamphlets kept up a desultory conflict. There were men about town, there were merchants, to meet in the new institution of coffee-houses and form an alert public opinion on state-affairs, which had been



impossible in the days of gild-festivities and slow, compact national feeling. The news-writers and pamphleteers spread the rumours of the City among the country-squires who held the chief power in the state. In consequence, the great satires of the date are not mere illustrations, they were potent causes of events ; and the highest genius was willing to spend itself on them.

The literary environment of the time was no less favourable. Charles II heralded a flood of French fashions, and among them the imitation of the polished French style of writing, just about to reach its zenith under the *Roi Soleil*. For some such movement English literature was ready ; the gorgeous and rather lawless originality of the dramatic era had been written out. Englishmen were not the full-blooded race they had been, freshly awakened to their new world, nor was there any longer the single audience of noble and 'prentice. That national solidarity had vanished even before the Civil War. So too the schools of far-fetched "wit" were dying down ; their agonized search for originality had too often found obscure bathos. Men wanted something perspicuous and correct, to which they could subscribe in their sober senses. Imagination, so much abused, was at a certain discount. Now French literature was admirably adapted to be a model for purveyors to the new taste, and that especially on its more satiric side. French delicacy and finesse and that *douce*

middle-aged charm of French sentiment are hard to come at in the English tongue. But French directness and point, French precision in art and thought could be imitated. Thus the heroic couplet, our metre nearest to the French alexandrine, drives out others, and itself tends to become still more than formerly a succession of epigrams in a strictly regular and limited scheme of melody. Not everyone can enjoy the effect of this metre, so used, on most subjects for poetry ; but for satire, what form of verse could be better than such a succession of vigorous strokes guided by sound sense ?

The movements I have indicated took some time for their completion, especially the literary one. For the first twenty years of Charles' reign we have indeed a progressive political satire ; but the influence of Cleveland is still predominant, and the chief satiric authors are unmistakably his disciples, though they gradually free themselves and are not servile imitators at worst.

One of the earliest of these was Sir William Davenant, the would-be son of Shakespeare (1606-68). Like most other poets of the time, he offered a gushing series of panegyrics to the restored King, and amid his praises of the royal policy made an attack or two on its victims, the Sectaries and nonconforming Presbyterians. The latter are pungent enough and offer us a smoother, feebler Cleveland. The Sectaries, he says,

...fashions of opinion love to change,  
And think their own the best for being strange;  
Their own, if it were lasting, they would hate;  
Yet call it conscience when 'tis obstinate.

A greater man than this insipid rhymer was Sir John Denham (1615-69), who in his poem of *Cooper's Hill* introduced pure descriptive poetry into England. In that poem, as in the fine lines on Strafford's trial, he is the disciple of Waller and belongs to the new school of French leanings; but in his post-Restoration satires, he is much more under the influence of Cleveland. - Each couplet contains a conceit, rather than the polished, antithetical epigram, and he keeps the old Jacobean tradition that satire should be rugged—his lines in fact are halting. The chief importance of his verse is to show when the new country-party lost patience with Charles II's court and government. Irritation at the persecuting Acts passed by the majority, the personal unpopularity of Lord Chancellor Clarendon, both for enforcing those Acts and for rigidly maintaining the Crown's sphere of action independent of Parliament, and the known corruption of the royal administration, all tended to make the new members who came in at bye-elections hostile to the ministers and court. They coalesced with the original semi-presbyterian minority and became more and more formidable. The Court was only able to thwart them by bribing the original members, who thus gained for the assembly the name of the Pension Parliament.

The smouldering indignation broke into flame in the second Dutch war, when the country heard the astounding news that the enemy had entered the Medway and burnt the ships of war, which with a curious folly, due to the misappropriation of funds, were left unfitted at anchor. While the shame was fresh, the satirists attacked the Court with all their power. A handle was given by the panegyrics on some earlier and none too complete victories in the war. Among these the then famous Waller had won in the race of adulation, and it was his *Instructions to a Painter* which were now continued by the Opposition writers. Denham first had the happy idea, mingling Waller's with Cleveland's style. The London was among the lost ships: the City had burnt the year before:

Next let the flaming London come in view,  
Like Nero's Rome, burnt to rebuild it new.  
What lesser sacrifice than this was meet  
To offer for the safety of the fleet?

This was stinging; but Denham went on to a personal attack on the Duke of York. He had wrongs to avenge: the Duke had seduced his wife, and it was said that the jealous Duchess had poisoned her. But he did not spare lesser captains either. The Duchess

...therefore the Duke's person recommends  
To Brunker, Pen and Coventry, her friends,  
To Pen much, Brunker more, most Coventry;  
For they, she knew, were more afraid than he.  
Of flying fishes one had saved the fin,  
And hoped by this he thro' the air might spin:

The other thought he might avoid the knell  
By the invention of the diving-bell:  
A third had tried it, and affirm'd a cable  
Coil'd round about him was impenetrable.  
But these the Duke rejected, only chose  
To keep far off; let others interpose.

The lines are not very good; yet they are among the best in the poem, and Denham's further attempts were much poorer. A second and third continuation owe what merit they have to the excellent opportunity for satire presented by the Court. He also gave the cue to a greater man, Andrew Marvell (1621-78).

The charm of that friend of Milton in his serious poems is so great that we turn with reluctance from their "witty delicacy" to the coarse hurly-burly of his satires. How could the same man, we wonder, have written both? Was he of a chameleon nature to change his style, which is perhaps the most inward quality of a poet, with his environment? The man, however, shows the same dual character, accused as he was of seaman's language, and undoubtedly tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter. He never varied in political consistency; but that consistency was of a peculiarly English type. Little attached to the theoretical political opinions of the kind that found favour with the Levellers and Divine-Right men, he was willing to work with any Protestant government that was honest and efficient and not too tyrannical. No enemy of Charles I, he made no difficulty at taking service under Cromwell, and afterwards promoted the

Restoration. It speaks ill for Charles II's Court and government that Marvell gradually came into permanent opposition. It can only have been a conviction that they were injuring the country. He could have had place and pension for his vote any day.

We have then in criticising Marvell's satires to remember two things. As an artist, he followed in Cleveland's footsteps, adopting a rough, abusive style, where the strain after effect forms the only link with the conceits of his lyric verse. As a politician, his business was to rouse public indignation against a shameless Court; and this was not to be done by delicate reserve. At the same time it must be admitted that he goes out of his way for obscene ridicule.

His earliest political satire, however, is of older date than the Restoration. *The Character of Holland*, written during the first Dutch war of 1653, is redolent of Cleveland's manner. It is a second edition of *The Rebel Scot*, turned with more rollicking humour and less real bitterness against a completely foreign foe; and like its predecessor looks back somewhat to the attacks on Scot and Frenchman under the Edwards. He describes the origin of Holland by the toil of its inhabitants excellently well.

Glad then as miners that have found the ore,  
They with mad labour fish'd the land to shore,  
And dived as desperately for each piece  
Of earth, as if 't had been of ambergris,

Collecting anxiously small loads of clay,  
 Less than what building swallows bear away,  
 Or than those pills which sordid beetles roll,  
 Transfusing into them their dunghill soul.

This burlesque has all the vigour of fine narrative, and therein, I think, surpasses Cleveland's. He goes on with more Dutch history, not quite so successfully perhaps, as the attack is more directly abusive, and not so much a ludicrous picture.

Therefore necessity, that first made kings,  
 Something like government among them brings;  
 For, as with pygmies who best kills the crane,  
 Among the hungry he that treasures grain,  
 Among the blind the one-eyed blinkard reigns,  
 So rules among the drowned he that drains.  
 Not, who first sees the rising sun, commands,  
 But who could first discern the rising lands;  
 Who best could know to pump an earth so leak,  
 Him they their Lord and Country's Father speak;  
 To make a bank was a great plot of state;  
 Invent a shovel, and be a magistrate.

Of course these lines are accompanied by many poorer: but such must be in every poem, and, if the majority have not all the pith of Cleveland's, they surpass his in geniality and flow of verse.

Marvell's next elaborate satire was suggested by Denham's assault on the Government in 1667. Marvell, too, with a far more powerful pen, lays bare the corruption of the Court. Scandals, some lies, some all too true, are told with a fierce humour in language of the coarsest. They are not interesting enough to quote, but the details that disgust us added force to the indictment then. "Too sharp," says Pepys of this or one of Denham's attacks, "and so true." As to style, Cleveland's invective

is modified more and more into wrathful narrative, the secret history of the day being brutally declared. Now and then there is a more pleasant humour recalling *The Character of Holland*. The best specimen is the description of the way a scapegoat was found by the Court-party for the disasters of the war. Sound sense is hid in the burlesque.

After this loss, to relish discontent,  
 Some one must be accused by Parliament.  
 All our miscarriages on Pett must fall;  
 His name alone seems fit to answer all.  
 Whose counsels first did this mad war beget?  
 Who all commands sold through the navy? Pett.  
 Who would not follow when the Dutch were beat?  
 Who treated out the time at Bergen? Pett.  
 Who the Dutch fleet with storms disabled met?  
 And, rifling prizes, them neglected? Pett.  
 Who with false news prevented the Gazette?  
 The fleet divided? Writ for Rupert? Pett.  
 Who all our seamen cheated of their debt?  
 And all our prizes, who did swallow? Pett.  
 Who did advise no navy out to set?  
 And who the forts left unprepared? Pett.  
 Who to supply with powder did forget  
 Languard, Sheerness, Gravesend, and Upnor? Pett.  
 Who all our ships exposed in Chatham net?  
 Who should it be but the fanatic Pett?  
 Pett, the sea-architect, in making ships,  
 Was the first cause of all these naval slips;  
 Had he not built, none of these faults had been;  
 If no creation, there had been no sin;  
 But his great crime, one boat away he sent,  
 That lost our fleet and did our flight prevent.

There could not be a better climax to the mock-reasoning. But Marvell never tried to make the whole piece a work of art. His satire rambles with events, nor is his wit by itself, good though it be, sufficient to plead against oblivion.

As noted above, Marvell was the best ballad-



writer of his day, and indeed his short satiric pieces have much to recommend them. A short epigram on Colonel Blood, written in Cleveland's manner, need only be mentioned ; but the ballad on the Statue in Stock's Market (1672) deserves quotation. This effigy of Charles II stood long draped, before it was altered from Sobieski (!) who was originally represented. Marvell jibes—

But Sir Robert<sup>1</sup> affirms that we do him much wrong ;  
'Tis the 'graver at work, to reform him, so long ;  
But, alas ! he will never arrive at his end,  
For it is such a king as no chisel can mend.

But with all his errors restore us our King,  
If ever you hope in December for Spring ;  
For tho' all the world cannot show such another,  
Yet we'd rather have him than his bigoted brother.

James had become a Roman Catholic by this time : and Charles evidently agreed with the satirist. "No one," he replied to his brother's warnings of assassination, "will ever kill me to make you king."

Taking leave of Marvell, one cannot but think that he could have been a greater satirist than he was. He had wit and humour, energy, conviction and power of argument. He could wield both rapier and quarter-staff. But he chose to be a pamphleteer in verse, and probably for his ends he knew his business best. He helped to create the Parliamentary Opposition, and we may gladly dispense with the crude laurels of satire for the author of *The Garden* and *Bermudas*.

So far we have traced Cleveland's spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Donor of the statue.

descendants among the opposition. The greatest of them, however, was a champion of the Court, but a champion, perhaps, not fashioned after its desire. Samuel Butler (1612-81) was a man of the elder generation, a friend of Cleveland, a contemporary of Milton. He passed the prime of his life during the Civil War and Commonwealth.

The Restoration found him ripe and middle-aged, and his famous *Hudibras* was partly composed of the jottings of earlier years. Hence we do not so much find in him the tendencies of the new school. French ease and classical simplicity are strange to him. What we do find is the old, loaded English style, with its conceits and superabundant learning of the schools, disturbed from its fanciful leisure by the Civil Wars and Puritan tyranny, and employed by a seldom poetic student whose wit amounted to genius. The nature of *Hudibras* partly accounts for the miserable failure of all attempts to imitate it. All the excellence of its form and manner was old and belonged to an age that was passing away. Its learning is the scholasticism of the Middle Ages; its wit reminds us of *Goliath*; its jogging metre of a twelfth-century romance. In it the decrepit Past, its beauty withered, rises to perform an antic dance for our benefit, and leaves us with an odour of mortality.

Here are sands, ignoble things,  
Dropt from the ruin'd sides of kings.

The pageant of the centuries has doffed its cloth

of gold, and turns to a squalid harlequinade. Its spectral enthusiasms travesty their former pomp. The casket of its secrets is opened to disclose a little dust.

It was no accident, therefore, which made Butler choose Cervantes as his model. There was a strong bond of kinship in their themes. Both satirized, with a certain sympathy for them, the superannuated fashions of former days, both some of contemporary follies ; and both were led into a vein of musing upon life and its fortunes which does not lose its application with the course of time. But there the resemblance ends. Cervantes had an innate kindness for humanity : the chief actors in his romance are living and loveable personalities ; the satire and the humour with which fact and fancy collide are almost a protest against Fate. But the Englishman is before all things a scholar, filled with annoyance at the reign of the fantastic busybodies of the Commonwealth. Hence his characters are paltry stalking horses : Hudibras leaves us without a glint of information on the Sir Samuel Luke he aped ; Ralpho is a phantom sectary. Their adventures are tediousness itself. It is what they say, and Butler says in person, that interests us. It is, to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, a criticism of life, past, present and to come, couched in unfading wit.

Unimportant as it is, the plot of the poem may be briefly explained. Hudibras is a Presbyterian

knight, who under the Commonwealth sallies out to reform the neighbourhood of its pleasant vices, attended by his squire Ralpho, a representative of the sectaries. The Puritans, we remember, had acquired a very unenviable reputation as foes of merry-making. His first exploit is to disperse a crowd intent on bear-baiting; but fortune soon deserts him, and the rallied mob are victorious and place Knight and Squire in the stocks. Hence they are rescued by a widow, to whom or rather to whose jointure the Knight makes his addresses. The condition of his release is that he should scourge himself, which of course he fails to do. They next get worsted by a crowd who are carting a truculent female; then quarrel with the astrologer, Sidrophel, whom they consult. Such are the contents of the first two parts of 1662 and 1664. The third which appeared in 1678 is occupied with a goblin-masquerade to which they are treated by the indignant widow, followed by an account of the fall of the Rump in 1660 and a legal scheme of the Knight to get the better of his lady-love.

It will be seen what a miserable story this is. Its ineptitude needs all Butler's wit to redeem it; and even that would not suffice if it dealt only with Puritan eccentricities. But its scope is universal, as its nature is most varied. He has more than the rapid play and learning of his master Cleveland. Unsuspected resemblances are revealed by the odd juxtaposition of ideas. The doggerel verse is used

to increase the ridicule, and extraordinary rhymes are employed, not for their ease, but to add to the surprise of the wit. And all through there runs a vein of unambitious, disillusioned wisdom, without which all the glitter of his quips and cranks would soon have palled. To us, the most living part is of course the satire of oddities not confined to Butler's time, like that on Hudibras' language :

For rhetoric, he could not ope  
 His mouth, but out there flew a trope;  
 And when he happened to break off  
 I' th' middle of his speech, or cough,  
 H' had hard words ready to show why,  
 And tell what rules he did it by;  
 Else, when with greatest art he spoke,  
 You'd think he talk'd like other folk;  
 For all a rhetorician's rules  
 Teach nothing but to name his tools.  
 His ordinary rate of speech,  
 In loftiness of sound, was rich;  
 A Babylonish dialect,  
 Which learned pedants much affect;  
 It was a party-colour'd dress  
 Of patch'd and piebald languages;  
 'Twas English cut on Greek and Latin,  
 Like fustian heretofore on satin;  
 It had an odd promiscuous tone,  
 As if h' had talk'd three parts in one,  
 Which made some think, when he did gabble,  
 Th' had heard three labourers of Babel,  
 Or Cerberus himself pronounce  
 A leash of languages at once. I. l. 81-104.

Nevertheless, some strictly contemporary satire is almost more brilliant, as that on the two Puritan types of religion. Hudibras' comes first :

For his religion, it was fit  
 To match his learning and his wit:  
 'Twas Presbyterian true-blue;  
 For he was of that stubborn crew

Of errant saints, whom all men grant  
 To be the true Church Militant;  
 Such as do build their faith upon  
 The holy text of pike and gun;  
 Decide all controversies by  
 Infallible artillery;  
 And prove their doctrine orthodox  
 By Apostolic blows and knocks;  
 Call fire and sword and desolation  
 A godly, thorough Reformation,  
 Which always must be carried on,  
 And still be doing, never done;  
 As if Religion were intended  
 For nothing else but to be mended:  
 A sect whose chief devotion lies  
 In odd perverse antipathies;  
 In falling out with that or this  
 And finding somewhat still amiss;  
 More peevish, cross, and splenetic,  
 Than dog distract or monkey sick;  
 That with more care keep holy day  
 The wrong, than others the right way;  
 Compound for sins they are inclined to,  
 By damning those they have no mind to;  
 Still so perverse and opposite,  
 As if they worshipp'd God for spite:  
 The self-same thing they will abhor  
 One way, and long another for:  
 Free will they one way disavow,  
 Another, nothing else allow:  
 All piety consists therein  
 In them, in other men all sin:  
 Rather than fail, they will defy  
 That which they love most tenderly;  
 Quarrel with mince-pies, and disparage  
 Their best and dearest friend, plum-porridge;  
 Fat pig and goose itself oppose,  
 And blaspheme custard through the nose.  
 Th' apostles of this fierce religion,  
 Like Mahomet's, were ass and widgeon,  
 To whom our Knight, by fast instinct  
 Of wit and temper, was so link'd,  
 As if hypocrisy and nonsense  
 Had got the advowson of his conscience. I. 1. 189-236.

This passage deserves its fame, come down from  
 the time when the "crowning mercy" of Worcester

was still fresh in men's recollections. But the same sustained raillery is frequent throughout, and the difficulty is to select one instance more than another. Ralph's "new light" is just as good.

For as of vagabonds we say,  
That they are ne'er beside their way,  
Whate'er men speak by this new light,  
Still they are sure to be i' th' right.  
'Tis a dark lantern of the spirit,  
Which none see by but those who bear it. I. 1. 501-6.

Nor is the dialectic of Knight and Squire less instinct with mockery. Butler himself must have liked to chop logic: he argues for them with such zest. And though their characters as men are the vaguest caricatures, their characters as disputants are always maintained. Much of their discourse lies outside political satire. Religion, love and marriage, poetry and philosophy, astrology and science, all come in for their share; and seldom do the verses fail. Butler's witticisms do not need, like Cleveland's, to be read *en masse*. His single sayings will stand by themselves; like those descriptions of the

petulant, capricious sects,  
The maggots of corrupted texts, III. 2. 9-10.

or the Leveller who

made the stoutest yield to mercy,  
When he engaged in controversy;  
Not by the force of carnal reason,  
But indefatigable teasing. III. 2. 449-52.

Sometimes he spreads out his matter; as in—

The oyster-women lock'd their fish up,  
And trudged away to cry No Bishop;

The mouse-trap men laid save-alls by,  
 And 'gainst Evil Counsellors did cry;  
 Botchers left old clothes in the lurch,  
 And fell to turn and patch the Church;  
 Some cried the Covenant instead  
 Of pudding-pies and gingerbread;

A strange, harmonious inclination  
 Of all degrees to Reformation.

I. 2. 539-54.

This is comic more than witty, but sometimes he combines the two effects, as in the following passage, the last there is space to quote, on the Roundhead confiscations and taxes. The Puritans

Could transubstantiate, metamorphose,  
 And charm whole herds of beasts, like Orpheus;  
 Enchant the King's and Church's lands,  
 T' obey and follow "their" commands,  
 And settle on a new freehold,  
 As Marcy-hill had done of old:  
 Could turn the Cov'nant and translate  
 The Gospel into spoons and plate;  
 Expound upon all merchants' cashes,  
 And open th' intricate places;  
 Could catechise a money-box,  
 And prove all pouches orthodox;  
 Until the Cause became a Damon,  
 And Pytheas the wicked Mammon.

III. 2. 1123-36.

The brilliance of *Hudibras* speaks for itself; it is perhaps the wittiest book ever written in English. Of its defects some have been mentioned already. The utter lack of coherence, of character and of proportion, make it hardly a work of art: we read it as we should a jest-book, and perpetual disconnected wit becomes tedious. Butler's learning and abundance also were pitfalls to him: he becomes obscure and heaps conceit upon conceit. Though his style is pithy, he becomes too lengthy



through a plethora of ideas<sup>1</sup>. Besides this, a Devil's advocate might say that his was an ungrateful office—to render old romance and lofty aims in a sordid dress. But he makes amends by his extraordinary wit, by force of which he became original, although he was not absolutely the first in his style or Hudibrastic metre. His wit, too, has the saving quality of underlying good sense : it is fantastic in appearance only. Thus it can still reach posterity, while the unreal gibe perishes. Herein it was aided by its wide range. Butler could not confine himself to mere party-verse ; and he has been rewarded for his breadth of interest by becoming a classic of the older English literature, even though he is something like a Court-Jester bringing up the rear and mocking the solemnities of a procession.

<sup>1</sup> Hume.

*plethora,  
ambiguity*

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SATIRIC AGE

The first eighteen years of Charles II's reign saw a gradually increasing discontent ; but the subjects of complaint were not yet unified. There was mismanagement, there was corruption, there were absolutist and papistical tendencies ; but Charles adroitly tided over the moments of exceptional strain, although at the cost of some concessions even to the Pension Parliament. But a widespread anger was rising in the nation, and these partial irritations were precipitated into a wholesale indignation by the fable of the Popish Plot. The people had been worked up into a justifiable state of chronic suspicion by the half-known events of the reign. There was an obvious movement in France, coupled with obscure intrigues in England, to enforce a universal Catholicism. So it is little wonder that an inventive knave was found to make his profit out of the public credulity. Out of this gruesome episode, with its sordid villainy, the two great

English parties sprang. The fear of Popery was bound to lead to an attempt to exclude the Duke of York, an avowed Papist, from the succession to his brother. The Country-party took up the question with a will; the Court and Church and the warmer loyalists resisted. Whig and Tory, in fact, if not in name, had appeared; and the future Whigs had obtained a leader of political genius in the person of the ex-Roundhead, ex-Cabal-minister, Shaftesbury.

One of the first necessities for the Country-party was to work up popular feeling against the Roman Catholics, and an instrument to this end was found in John Oldham (1654–83) with his *Satires* against the Jesuits. Oldham, like some other devout men, was a converted rake; and, still young, retained in virtue, perhaps, the reckless heat of temperament which had led him into vice. Was he a poet? It is hard to say; he died quite young, only four years after his *Satires* were published. The latter have great merits of declamation and studied rhetoric. They are the works of a scholar and a man of pronounced talent, but after all they do not show any specially poetical qualities. His ear for verse was poor, and in his satires there is a remarkable absence of any free play of the imagination. Heavy melodrama is all he can show, which does not give much promise for the future, in spite of Dryden's praise. His love-poems are luscious, but not

sweet. There is nothing like the charm of so many Restoration lyrics in them.

— But as a satirist he was original. He introduced into English the sustained general denunciation of the Latin satirists<sup>1</sup>. He does not give rapid taunts or lists of misdeeds like his predecessors: as he says of Charles IX, he “scorns retail.” And his generalized vituperation is effective too. Incredible blood and thunder fill the scene; but they at least make a real clamour and smell raw. He is not following a fashion in invective. One is inclined to think him a genuine fanatic; his indignation is real. He conceives of the Jesuits as the dread antitheses of good. There, however, his merits end. He had no sense of irony or dramatic fitness. Hence he places his objurgations in Jesuit mouths, with an extraordinary mixture of triumphant, conscious wickedness and bigotry. The Jesuit Garnet’s Ghost gloats over murder as “Hell’s most proud exploit,” and exhorts his successors to

have only will  
Like Hell and me, to covet and act ill.

Yet these conscious fiends are somehow occupied in fighting “heretics” and saving the Church. The muddle is inextricable, as the sentiments are worthy of Hieronimo.

What redeems his defects is the fine energy of exaggeration, which exalts a passage like the

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Courthope.

following on Charles IX and St Bartholomew's day.

He scorn'd like common murderers to deal  
By parcels and piecemeal; he scorn'd retail  
In the trade of death; whole myriads died by the great,  
Soon as one single life; so quick their fate,  
Their very prayers and wishes came too late.

The last lines make us forgive much bad verse and bad rhyme. So, too, when in his own person he attacks the Jesuit principle of "doing ill that good may come," his exaggerations throw a lurid light on the real meaning of the decorous phrase.

And yet 'twere well, were their foul guilt but thought  
Base sin; 'tis something even to own a fault.  
But here the boldest flights of wickedness  
Are stamped religion, and for current pass.  
The blackest, ugliest, horriddest, damnedst deed,  
For which hell flames, the schools a title need,  
If done for Holy Church is sanctified.  
This consecrates the blessed work and tool,  
Nor must we ever after think 'em foul.  
To undo realms, kill peasants, murder kings,  
Are thus but petty trifles, venial things,  
Not worth a confessor; nay, Heaven shall be  
Itself invoked to abet the impiety.

As may be seen here, Oldham was a master of the art of leading up to a climax. It was more delicate powers that he lacked. In consequence, to pile up the agony was his only means for effect. The economy of true art was impossible for him. Nevertheless, he begins a line of denunciatory satirists, who like him generalize their pictures and charge the shadows in them, while they try to avoid his artistic faults, and fail to attain his vigour.

Very different from this Protestant flail was the next writer to appear upon the scene. The storm raised by the legend of the Popish Plot was quick to die down, but not so the ground-swell of the agitation for the Exclusion Bill. Shaftesbury organized his party in the country and Parliament, and nearly succeeded in forcing the King's hand. Three new Parliaments were elected in succession, and each of them was hostile to James. But Charles was an adept at reading the signs of the times. He gave his opponents, Whigs as they were now definitely styled, rope ; waited till their violence discredited them ; waited till the dread of another civil war could have its full effect ; waited till men were ashamed of the cruel panic of the Plot ; waited till the natural loyalty of the nation resented the ignominious treatment of its royal house. Then he dissolved his last Parliament in 1681 at Oxford, where no half-nonconformist city-mob would riot for Shaftesbury. Still even with his French pension and with the possession of the administration, he was only just able to keep down the Whigs. It was necessary to attack their influence among the educated classes of the towns, and for this purpose Charles had the happy thought of calling on his laureate, Dryden, to satirize the Whigs and their Exclusion Bill.

Dryden (1631—1700) was the apostle of the new school of poetry. This is as much as to say that he was the poet of greatest genius among

that younger generation which came to the front under Charles II. Waller and Denham had been the precursors of the movement. Smoothness, accuracy and epigrammatic point were the things most desired ; and, as already mentioned, contemporary French literature supplied the models. Dryden himself in the prologue to an early play desiderates "a mingled chime of Jonson's humour and Corneille's rhyme." Jonson's humour, indeed, and the strong imagination of the earlier poets vanished quickly, but it was Dryden's task to build up in their stead, out of the heroic couplets, a lofty, vigorous verse, full of poetic fire, yet possessing the best qualities of prose, in which, too, he accomplished a somewhat similar revolution. He excelled in a well-ordered, perspicuous phrase and lucid reasoning. To some of us imagination and charm, with the power to reach the deeper springs of heart and mind, will not seem gifts of his. But of the obvious and the matter-of-fact he was an undoubted master ; and his fine, though limited, ear for verse enabled him to attain "the long, majestic march and energy divine," for which Pope praises him.

The first Tory satire that Dryden produced for his employers was the famous *Absalom and Achitophel*. During the agitation over the Exclusion Bill, Shaftesbury's greatest blunder had been the production of the King's putative son, the Duke of Monmouth, as a claimant to the

succession. There was talk of his legitimacy, but on the whole the scheme appeared in its true light as a departure from law and precedent, and as an injustice to James' daughters, who were undoubted Protestants. On this weak point Dryden launched his attack, describing the Whig proceedings under names taken from Biblical history. The device was not quite original with him, but his was the whole excellence of plan and execution. He raised satire to epic dignity<sup>1</sup>. In spite of the obligation to follow actual events, the poem is a work of art. The lack of a plot is skilfully disguised in the orderly movement of the poem. Arrangement takes the place of adventures. Unnecessary details and day's wonders are eliminated. In a series of brilliant character-sketches the leading Whigs are brought on the scene ; the seduction of Absalom (Monmouth) by Achitophel (Shaftesbury) is described in masterly speeches, followed by a parody of the action they took. Then comes a series of Tory portraits ; and we are deluded into thinking we have reached a finale in a narrative by an improved version of Charles' speech from the throne in 1681.

The character-sketches are the chief glory of the poem, and, hackneyed though they be, it is necessary to quote the two best, since they are the greatest satiric descriptions in English literature. One is that of Shaftesbury :

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Courthope.



Of these the false Achitophel was first,  
 A name to all succeeding ages curst:  
 For close designs and crooked counsels fit,  
 Sagacious, bold and turbulent of wit,  
 Restless, unfix'd in principles and place,  
 In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;  
 A fiery soul, which working out its way,  
 Fretted the pigmy body to decay  
 And o'er-inform'd the tenement of clay.  
 A daring pilot in extremity,  
 Pleased with the danger when the waves went high,  
 He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,  
 Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.  
 Great wits are sure to madness near allied  
 And thin partitions do their bounds divide;  
 Else, why should he, with wealth and honours blest,  
 Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?  
 Punish a body which he could not please,  
 Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?

Dryden had found his vocation, though so late ;  
 he never wrote better poetry, as well as satire,  
 than these famous lines. The pathos of human  
 fate sounds muffled in them like running water  
 behind rock. Those on Buckingham are also a  
 model of invective, but, if their wit is even greater,  
 their poetic quality is not so fine.

In the first rank of these did Zimri stand,  
 A man so various that he seem'd to be  
 Not one, but all mankind's epitome:  
 Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,  
 Was everything by starts and nothing long;  
 But in the course of one revolving moon  
 Was chymist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon;  
 Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,  
 Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.  
 Blest madman, who could every hour employ  
 With something new to wish or to enjoy!  
 Railing and praising were his usual themes,  
 And both, to show his judgment, in extremes:  
 So over violent or over civil  
 That every man with him was God or Devil.

In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;  
 Nothing went unrewarded but desert.  
 Beggar'd by fools whom still he found too late,  
 He had his jest, and they had his estate.

Dryden justly piqued himself on the finish of this passage ; it would have been so easy to be obscene or bludgeonly over Buckingham.

I should like to quote more examples of Dryden's sarcasms and humorous invective, such antithetic epigrams, for instance, as

But far more numerous was the herd of such  
 Who think too little and who talk too much,

but I must confine myself to his libel on the English people, full of humorous scorn as it is.

The Jews, a headstrong, moody, murmuring race,  
 As ever tried the extent and stretch of grace;  
 God's pamper'd people, whom, debauch'd with ease,  
 No king could govern, nor no God could please;  
 Gods they had tried of every shape and size  
 That godsmiths could produce or priests devise;  
 These Adam-wits, too fortunately free,  
 Began to dream they wanted liberty;  
 And when no rule, no precedent was found  
 Of men by laws less circumscribed and bound,  
 They led their wild desires to woods and caves  
 And thought that all but savages were slaves.

Dryden has been lauded for the high plane of his satire, but this must be taken with some qualification. He was but a hireling after all, and praised or blamed as the court-wind blew. We need look for no scruple as to the subject or object of his attacks, save a certain poetic conscience, which made him anxious to do the thing as well as it could be done. Thus his flaws of taste are far fewer than those of his predecessors, and there

is a sort of aulic decorum in his compositions, befitting the king of his fellow-writers. Add to this a masculine good sense and strength of mind, and we see how many qualities, but also what prosaic ones on the whole, went to make up the classic English political satire.

Dryden did not quit the field after one victory. In three more Whig and Tory satires, provoked by attacks upon him, he renewed the fray, two, *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe*, being solely his own, a third, the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*, more edited than written by him. But he never equalled his first satire in interest. The others are less pithy, less full, and concern mostly lesser men. Not that they lack (so far as they are his) the fine characteristics of his verse and style, but they are outshone by their predecessor.

New events, however, made him take a new departure in his argumentative style. James II succeeded to the throne in 1685. Catholicism became the road to court-favour, and Dryden, about the same time as Nell Gwynne, was converted to the sovran's creed. "No great loss to the Church," says Evelyn, and, in view of Dryden's history and character, it is impossible to give him credit for exalted motives. Protestations of his cannot count for much : nor could the obloquy he risked by timeserving be a deterrent to the veteran adulator. Too often already he could have said with Parolles, "If my heart were great, 'twould

burst at this." At the same time, the *Religio Laici*, his defence of the Church of England in 1682, shows, I think, that Catholicism would come easily to him ; he was already perplexed by the fact that the original text of the Bible was not to be had ; and those were the days of literal inspiration in the Protestant churches. *See?*

However this may be, he lost no time in putting his faculties at the service of his new faith. For it he wrote the semi-satiric fable of *The Hind and the Panther*, published in 1687. Unfortunately the royal policy suffered a change during its execution. For some time after his accession James II hoped to secure legal toleration, and in practice much more, for the Catholics from the Church and Tory party. The end of his brother's reign had been devoted to placing the latter in power in the corporations, and in consequence James' Parliament was enthusiastically loyal. But it was also enthusiastically Anglican, and James asked the one thing it would not grant, the repeal of the Test Acts. The baffled King fell back on those stretches of the Prerogative, the dispensing and suspending powers, which in one form or another had always been in use. Like a true Stewart, however, he gave them a general application, very different from the particular use of them by the Tudors, while the theories of succession by Divine Right and of indefeasible Prerogative made it really impossible to come to

terms with him, all bargains between King and subjects being invalid. Still James looked for allies among his people, and hoped to find them in the Nonconformists, whom he therefore set about restoring to power in the corporations. What Dryden thought of this we do not know, unless his dislike of Father Petre ("The Martin") is inspired by dislike for the policy which the priest supported. His pliant Muse, at first gracious to the Anglicans and contemptuous of the sects, becomes by the end of the poem acerb to the former, and is dulcified by an apologetic preface towards the latter, who were to profit by the King's Declaration of Indulgence.

*The Hind and the Panther* (1687) suffers, too, by the absurd artificiality of its plot. Lyndsay and Spenser had used the animals of the medieval beast-fable for types of persons, to whom the attribution of human learning and professions only added quaintness. Dryden's are institutions, the Hind being the Roman, the Panther the Anglican Church and so on ; and, what with a mixture of history, personification and theological argument, there results a hopeless mingle-mangle of tropes, figures, facts and allegories. The treatment of the details, however, shows all his sober colouring and poetic skill. The easy, unembarrassed verse shapes itself to its theme ; but its serious parts are after all too open to ridicule to be effective. It is when Dryden towards the end diverges into

subsidiary fables in his satire of the Church of England, that he rises to his best. The clergy and his special adversary, Bishop Burnet, are mocked with a light sardonic humour, unequalled in English verse elsewhere. The parsons, it should be said, are represented as a breed of amatory pigeons, the Catholic priests, not quite happily from the celibate point of view, as domestic poultry. The Doves are indignant at their rivals' favour :

And much they grieved to see so nigh their hall  
The bird that warn'd St Peter of his fall;  
That he should raise his mitred crest on high,  
And clap his wings and call his family  
To sacred rites; and vex the ethereal powers  
With midnight matins at uncivil hours;  
Nay more, his quiet neighbours should molest,  
Just in the sweetness of their morning rest.  
Beast of a bird, supinely when he might  
Lie snug and sleep, to rise before the light!  
What if his dull forefathers used that cry,  
Could he not let a bad example die?  
The world was fallen to an easier way;  
This age knew better than to fast and pray.  
Good sense in sacred worship would appear  
So to begin as they might end the year.  
Such feats in former times had wrought the falls  
Of crowing Chanticleers in cloister'd walls.  
Expell'd for this and for their lands, they fled,  
And sister Partlet, with her hooded head,  
Was hooted hence, because she would not pray a-bed.  
The way to win the restiff world to God  
Was to lay by the disciplining rod,  
Unnatural fasts, and foreign forms of prayer:  
Religion frights us with a mien severe.  
'Tis prudence to reform her into ease,  
And put her in undress, to make her please;  
A lively faith will bear aloft the mind,  
And leave the luggage of good works behind.

This sportive irony, ingeniously turning the tables

as it did on strict and self-righteous Protestants, is infinitely more telling than Oldham's fantastic self-revelations of Jesuits. But Dryden, in addition to his genius, was better equipped. He teems with allusions, not only [to books and learning, but to contemporary talk and manners. Thus we have the insinuated comparison, insulting enough, of Anglicanism to the modish, unvested ladies of Lely's pictures. He himself, one fears, illustrates only too well the moral relaxation of contemporary England, its grovelling self-interest, its disbelief in the higher springs of action. But we must not forget that he is also the literary symptom of its reasonableness and its composed outlook on life. How the very notion of wit has changed from the old quibbles and conceits! The irregular sallies of barbarism are being left behind. We have reached the orderliness of a settled civilization, in which even political revolutions take a regular, organized form. And if in poetry and art the great figures of older fancy, both classic and medieval, have become attenuated to smirking dwarfs, they are none the less proportionate and graceful.

Although the Court had the best writer of the day on its side, it could not gain the rank and file so easily. Ballads came thick and fast, and the best of them were against it. Some of them have both wit and humour. The modern element increases; worn-out forms, like the Litany, gradually

die away. In one<sup>1</sup> we see the disgust felt when Algernon Sidney was done to death partly on the strength of an undivulged treatise, composed many years before.

Algernon Sidney  
Of Commonwealth kidney,  
Composed a damn'd libel (ay, marry, was it),  
Writ to occasion  
Ill-blood in the nation,  
And therefore dispersed it all over his closet.

At that time, however, the Whigs were muzzled politically by the remodelling of the Corporations, and it is not easy to see where the Crown would have been vulnerable, had not James by his anti-Anglican policy estranged the Tories too. He was not content with obtaining a civil equality by the use of his dispensing power: he began to force Catholics into Anglican preferments, while his army with its Catholic officers camped ominously on Hounslow Heath. His belated attempt to conciliate the Dissenters did not improve his position; he only helped to replace the Whigs in power in their corporation strongholds. Finally, even his Declaration of Indulgence relieved the Dissenters of their disabilities at a price that in general they were unwilling to give, the acknowledgment of an unfettered prerogative. Meantime the mass of Englishmen rallied to the national church, which none could think a half-way house to Rome or a slave to prerogative, when the royal

<sup>1</sup> *A New Song of the Times*, 1683.



satirist was whistled on to attack it, and the Seven Bishops were persecuted for refusing to read a Declaration contrary to law. The nation was determined to give up no safeguard against Catholicism (and the Huguenots were fleeing then from France), and scoffed at the very idea of an equivalent. A ballad of 1688 gives the popular view of the Test.

A politic law which Recusants did doom,  
That into our Senate they never might come ;  
But *equivalent* soon was proposed in its room.

Sing hey, brave Popery, ho, rare Popery.

O fine Popery, O dainty Popery ho !

As if a true friend should in kindness demand  
A tooth in my head, which firmly doth stand,  
To give for't another he had in his hand.

Sing hey, brave Popery, ho, rare Popery,

O fine Popery, O dainty Popery ho !

Such a state of public feeling could not last long. The birth of the Prince of Wales made even Tories desperate at the prospect of another legitimate Catholic king. Both parties combined to declare the child supposititious. The Prince of Orange was invited over ; there was a rapid scene-shifting, and Divine Right and indefeasible Prerogative were banished from English public law.

Yet they were not easily banished from opinion. The exile of the Stewarts created a new party from the extreme Tories, the Jacobites of romance. To men of the time they formed a very prosaic and rather underhand opposition. The Revolution placed Whigs and Tories in a less defined position than before. They had clear principles to guide

them : one party was for Parliament and toleration of Dissent, the other for Royal authority and the Church. But their practical policy for the moment was bound to be much the same : they both supported, as grudgingly as might be, their deliverer, William III. He on his side had no notion of party-government ; he chose his own ministers—once or twice they were all of one political complexion—and had no reason to be otherwise than vexed at the continuance of Whigs and Tories. Nevertheless, they remained, and steadily grew more cohesive under the leadership of the great families through this reign and the next. The permanence of Parliament in the new order aided in establishing their solidarity. It sat for some months every year, and the members were continually acting in concert. The main interest of the sessions was of course financial, though the whole administration was now regularly checked by Parliament ; and it was on its financial side that the government of King William was most susceptible of criticism. Liberty was expensive. The Revolution made England perforce leader of the league against prepotent France, which was the model of despotism and of encroaching Catholicism for Europe. William's intervention in England had been but a move in the international game, and, if England wished to keep James II out, she must also resist the supremacy of Louis XIV.

But the taxes grew under the stress of war, a war which though successful was singularly devoid of victories and triumph. Here the Jacobite ballad-writers saw their chance. The days had gone, when the Whig Lord Wharton's *Lilliburlero*, doggerel words to a charming tune, could fan the flame against James. And the growth of habits of discussion had led to the abandonment of the Censorship of the Press in 1695. Thus time and means served them. A composition of Edward Ward (1667—1731), rhymester, satirist and innkeeper, will do for a favourable specimen of their efforts.

We pay for our new-born, we pay for our dead,  
We pay if we're single, we pay if we're wed ;  
To show that our merciful Senate don't fail,  
They begin at the head and tax down to the tail,  
We pay through the nose by subjecting foes,  
Yet for all our expenses get nothing but blows :  
At home we're cheated, abroad we're defeated,  
But the end on't, the end on't—the Lord above knows.

This is a worthy parallel to a famous description of Sidney Smith under the not dissimilar circumstances of the Revolutionary wars.

Before William III died, however, Englishmen heartily accepted a new European war against France, thanks to the way in which King Louis showed his ulterior designs in securing the Spanish Succession. The presence of a native Stewart on the throne, too, in the person of Anne, made the monarchy popular ; and Marlborough's ascendancy obscured the steady growth of party in the ad-

ministration. The Whigs appeared to hold power as the friends of the favourite, and the Tories, not openly cashiered, could not deny that whatever faults the general had, Louis XIV would nevermore

at Notre Dame  
Te Deum sing in quiet.

But the wrath of the Tories slowly grew. The trial of Dr Sacheverell showed how strong their tenets of royal power and Anglicanism, however stultified the first was by the Revolution, were in the country. Marlborough became the object of libels and squibs, and very wretched ones they were.

Yet it was not the Tory Party, but the Queen, who drove Marlborough from power. Parliament was not for years to claim a voice in the appointment of ministers. It had not even come to the stage of compelling their resignation, if it disliked them. So when the new female favourite, Mrs Masham, ousted Marlborough and his Duchess, the angry Whigs turned on her and her Tory mistress. One ballad goes :

Whenas Queen Anne of great renown  
Great Britain's sceptre sway'd,  
Besides the Church she dearly loved  
A dirty chambermaid.

O! Abigail, that was her name,  
She starch'd and stitch'd full well;  
But how she pierced this royal heart  
No mortal man can tell.

It is an interesting fact that the greater number

of English party-satires have proceeded from the Opposition. The Outs not only have anger and ambition to spur them on ; but they have much more of a tangible nature to criticize : the ministers are obliged to act and therefore err. Thus the conclusion of the Peace of Utrecht evoked a storm of ballads, which did not recognize that, if it were inglorious, it was also profitable. But the Tories were now to find a skilful defender in that light, undress verse which is needed for day-to-day bickerings.

Jonathan Swift (1667—1745) finally threw in his lot with the Tories in the autumn of 1710, and became their indispensable pamphleteer. In his verses a rather glum humour appears. One point of Tory policy was to keep the Dissenters out of political power by preventing the practice of occasional conformity, by which they evaded the Corporation Act. [The Dean ironically defends the Whigs :

For if it be not strange  
That religion should change,  
As often as climates and fashions;  
Then sure there's no harm,  
That one should conform,  
To serve their own private occasions.]

He comments on Sacheverell's prosecution in the same tone :

The subject's most loyal  
That hates the blood royal,  
And they for employments have merit,  
Who swear queen and steeple  
Were made by the people,  
And neither have right to inherit.

The monarchy's fix'd,  
 By making on't mix'd,  
 And by non-resistance o'erthrown;  
 And preaching obedience  
 Destroys our allegiance,  
 And thus the Whigs prop up the throne.

The argumentative power of these verses is very remote from the ways of most ballads ; but Swift could portray and denounce as well. He assails Marlborough on his fall with extraordinary and perhaps deserved bitterness.

While he his utmost strength applied,  
 To swim against this popular tide,  
 The golden spoils flew off apace;  
 Here fell a pension, there a place:  
 The torrent merciless imbibes  
 Commissions, perquisites and bribes;  
 By their own weight sunk to the bottom;  
 Much good may't do them that have caught 'em !  
 And Midas now neglected stands,  
 With asses' ears and dirty hands.

Perhaps the direct vigour here marks the nearest approach of Swift to poetical feeling. Truth to say, his verses are hard to relish. Too often there is a dry brutality about them, in spite of their undoubted power. Even his rollicking moods have not the geniality of other men's, as may be seen from a later piece of his on the Irish imbroglio of Wood's Halfpence.

When foes are o'ercome, we preserve them from slaughter,  
 To be hewers of wood and drawers of water.  
 Now, although to draw water is not very good,  
 Yet we all should rejoice to be hewers of Wood.

The Heathens, we read, had gods made of wood,  
 Who could do them no harm, if they did them no good;  
 But this idol Wood may do us great evil;  
 Their gods were of wood, but our Wood is the Devil.

It is a relief to turn from Swift, the saturnine, prosaic genius, to the insignificant Tickell, his contemporary, who wrote one piece of genial raillery, which is not devoid of poetry. The Whigs had carried the day at Queen Anne's death, chiefly because their leaders were personally superior in character to the Tory statesmen. So now the Tories were the Outs, reduced to scoffs at the new dynasty :

God prosper long our noble king,  
His Turks<sup>1</sup> and Germans all.

They had no hope of office from the House of Hanover. George I came ignorant of English language and customs, but perfectly aware that the Tories were more than half Jacobite and possibly exaggerating the stress they laid on their principles. The Jacobites thought that now was their chance. Here was an unpopular dynasty, and a great party which embraced the majority of Englishmen, out of power and discontented, while Scotland, more inclined to the Stewarts in feeling, was specially indignant at the recent Union. Lord Mar rose in Perthshire. But the Jacobite leaders, including the Chevalier, were inept as well as Queen Anne's Tory ministers. Then the English Tories were suspicious of a Roman Catholic King of uncertain origin, and did not desire the presence of a Highland Army. The rebellion

<sup>1</sup> Besides his German retinue George I brought over some Turkish slaves.

collapsed miserably : and the Whigs rejoiced insultingly over the flight of James III. The belief in his spurious birth, one may remark, was more important to the dying Tory creed of Divine Right, than to theirs :

'Twas when the seas were roaring  
With blasts of northern wind,  
Young Perkin lay deploring  
On warming pan reclined.

Wide o'er the roaring billows  
He cast a dismal look,  
And shiver'd like the willows  
That tremble o'er the brook<sup>1</sup>.

It was to increase the national dislike of and contempt for the Highlanders that Thomas Tickell wrote his *Imitation of the Prophecy of Nereus*.

As Mar his round one morning took,  
(Whom some call earl, and some call duke)  
And his new brethren of the blade,  
Shivering with fear and frost, survey'd,  
On Perth's bleak hills he chanced to spy  
An aged wizzard six foot high,  
With bristled hair and visage blighted,  
Wall-eyed, bare-haunch'd and second-sighted.

The grizzly sage in thought profound  
Beheld the chief with back so round,  
Then roll'd his eyeballs to and fro  
O'er his paternal hills of snow,  
And into these tremendous speeches  
Broke forth the prophet without breeches.

"Into what ills betray'd by thee,  
This ancient kingdom do I see!  
Her realms unpeopled and forlorn!  
Wae's me! that ever thou wert born!  
Proud English loons (our clans o'ercome)  
On Scottish pads shall amble home;  
I see them dress'd in bonnets blue  
(The spoils of thy rebellious crew);

<sup>1</sup> T. Wright, *Caricature History of the Georges*.



I see the target cast away,  
And chequer'd plaid become their prey,  
The chequer'd plaid to make a gown  
For many a lass in London town.

"In vain thy hungry mountaineers  
Come forth in all their warlike gears,  
The shield, the pistol, durk and dagger,  
In which they daily wont to swagger,  
And oft have sallied out to pillage  
The henroosts of some peaceful village,  
Or while their neighbours were asleep,  
Have carried off a lowland sheep.

"What boots thy highborn host of beggars,  
Macleans, Mackenzies, and Macgregors,  
With popish cutthroats, perjured ruffians,  
And Foster's troop of ragamuffins?

"In vain thy lads about thee bandy,  
Inflamed with bagpipes and with brandy."

The rest is praise of the Scottish Whigs. This masterpiece of light verse, with its echoes of Marvell's serious style, almost has political importance as an illustration of that English good humour which has made Parliamentary institutions possible ; it also, one must admit, exemplifies that somewhat coarse contempt of Englishmen for the Keltic fringe, which has been a part-cause of so many later difficulties for the United Kingdom.

While ineffectual Romance was thus fading in the North, a momentous, prosaic revolution was taking place at the centre of politics. The absence of George I from the meetings of his ministers, due to his ignorance of the English language, combined with the fact that ministers were all of a party to give the Cabinet more definition than heretofore. Nobody could doubt that the group of men who met in that informal council held the

King's confidence and the reins of government. The legislation which had been directed against its existence in Queen Anne's day could not be repeated. The need of it was too obvious. The further need of a permanent president to direct its deliberations and be factotum for a monarch, who even when in England was something of an absentee, was almost immediately to make itself felt, although for years the stubborn fact was to be resisted. For the moment, however, the main aim of Whig statesmen was to enter the Cabinet, and every event was made the subject of intrigues for that end. There is a capital squib of 1719 occasioned by the efforts of seven of them to regain their places by currying favour with the Prince of Wales, who in Georgian fashion was his father's enemy. It is too good not to quote at some length :

To Richmond these Seven Wise Men went,  
 Gall Walpole's barge it bore 'em,  
 Our Hope his course to meet them bent,  
 Six footmen march'd before him:  
 In his embroider'd coat they found him,  
 With all his strutting dwarfs around him.

"Welcome, my lords and gentlemen,  
 I'm glad to see your faces;  
 First kiss my royal hand, and then  
 Walk in and take your places:  
 Set me my chair, on either hand  
 I give you Wise Men leave to stand."

. . . . .

Quoth Robin<sup>1</sup> next in mighty glee,  
 Of whom it is much doubt,

<sup>1</sup> Sir R. Walpole.

Whether more wise, or howe'er 't be,  
 Doth now at last shine out—  
 "To lay these thirteen fools<sup>1</sup> quite flat,  
 We must do something wise,—but what?  
 "We'll say the King's in possession;  
 Ergo, 'twill plainly seem,  
 They're enemies to the succession,  
 Who're just and true to him:  
 And therefore, Sir, we Seven Wise Men  
 Do pray for you know what—Amen!"

Thus wisely spoke these Seven Wise Men,  
 And thus the Eighth replied:  
 "O! what reward, good Friends, and when  
 Shall I for you provide?—  
 And yet I must to save expenses  
 E'en starve you, as I starve my wenches.  
 "Though you should fail to gain the prize,  
 Mistaken in your rules,  
 Ye Wise Men, hear what I advise,  
 Go fright these thirteen fools;  
 For next to hearing of a drum beat,  
 I should delight in such a combat.  
 "But twice ten long years hence and more,  
 When 'tis my turn to reign,  
 If you don't die or dote before,  
 And I these thoughts retain,  
 You that have lost your places—then,  
 Perhaps, may have them all again."

Walpole and his friends, however, did not have to wait so long. He soon made his peace with George I and returned to power. It is a commonplace concerning Sir Robert that he provided his country with two unwelcome benefits, peace and the prime-ministership. Both were necessary under the circumstances, for a state under a foreign king, just emerged from exhausting wars with a peerless opportunity for commercial development, and

<sup>1</sup> Ministers.

divided at home by bitter factions : but both were profoundly unpopular. Walpole in vain tried to disguise the fact that the other ministers were his subordinates. It was too patent that a dissentient or would-be rival for the royal ear had to resign. Then his severe discipline over his partisans in Parliament was notorious. It is true that votes in the Commons, growing as it was more and more the centre of the state, had long been bought and sold ; but now a disobedient vote was at once punished by loss of place or pension. Even in that corrupt age, when borough-owning was easily condoned, such a complete system aroused criticism. The discontented Whigs and the Tories, calling themselves Patriots, were loud in their denunciations of the tyrannical, corrupt minister, who kept them from the sweets of office. In Parliament and in the country they kept up a vigorous, and occasionally successful opposition. They were fortunate, mainly through their connection with the literary Tory, Bolingbroke, in having allies in some of the leading writers of the day. Pope aided them with more exalted verse, while John Gay (1685—1732) joined in with side-hits in a lighter vein.

Gay's first attack on the Minister was in his comic piece, preluding Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Beggar's Opera*, where the character of the highwayman, Macheath, was palpably intended for him. The government actually thought it best to

prohibit the performance of *Polly*, the sequel to the dangerous mockery of the opera. They could not, however, prevent the publication of his second posthumous volume of *Fables*, in which various sly allusions, all in Gay's easy, unexalted manner, were made to Walpole. Corruption, it seems, is prevalent in the beast-world.

A tempting turnip's silver skin  
Drew a base hog through thick and thin:  
Bought with a stag's delicious haunch,  
The mercenary wolf was staunch:  
The convert fox grew warm and hearty,  
A pullet gain'd him to the party:  
The golden pippin in his fist,  
A chattering monkey join'd the list.

Elsewhere the discipline enforced is the grievance :

All consciences must bend and ply;  
You must vote on and not know why:  
Through thick and thin you must go on;  
One scruple and your place is gone.

There has been a revolution in opinion since these lines were written. They are evidence, nevertheless, of how reluctantly England found salvation in party-government. Of better quality are the lines attacking the Prime Ministership, which was a greater novelty and inspired more real aversion.

A bear of shag and manners rough,  
At climbing trees expert enough,  
For dext'rously, and safe from harm,  
Year after year he robb'd the swarm:  
Thus thriving on industrious toil,  
He gloried in his pilfer'd spoil.  
This trick so fill'd him with conceit,  
He thought no enterprise too great.  
Alike in sciences and arts,  
He boasted universal parts;

Pragmatic, busy, bustling, bold,  
His arrogance was uncontroll'd:  
And thus he made his party good,  
And grew dictator of the wood.  
The beasts with admiration stare,  
And think him a prodigious Bear.  
Were any common booty got,  
'Twas his each portion to allot:  
For why? he found there might be picking,  
Ev'n in the carving of a chicken.  
Intruding thus, he by degrees  
Claim'd, too, the butcher's larger fees.  
And now his overweening pride  
In ev'ry province will preside.  
No task too difficult was found:  
His blundering nose misleads the hound.  
In stratagems and subtle arts,  
He overrules the fox's parts.

We have fallen a long way from Dryden's Hind and Panther here. Gay, however, was but an underling and the press-campaign in the *Craftsman* against the Minister was carried on by more distinguished pens. So formidable did the Opposition become that Walpole sought to silence it with the aid of the Law-courts. His task was the easier as the then conception of libel included most criticism on the government. However, in this particular case the defendants got off on another debatable question in law. The Judges as a rule held that the Jury could only decide in a libel case on the fact of publication, and must leave the all-important decision as to whether the incriminated statement was a libel or not to them; for that they said was a question of Law, of which they alone were the exponents. It can be imagined how fatal the minister-appointed Judges were to opponents of

the government. But the Juries did not always tamely submit, and on this occasion triumphantly brought in a general verdict of acquittal. The verdict had such importance (as criticism indeed might be impossible under a system of purely judicial decisions) that no less a person than the leader of the Opposition, Pulteney himself, celebrated it in a rejoicing and long-remembered ballad, *The Honest Jury*.

You may call this man *fool* who treaties does blunder,  
And style him a *knave* who his country does plunder;  
If the *Peace* be not good, it can ne'er be a crime  
To wish it were better in prose or in rhyme,

For Sir Philip<sup>1</sup> well knows  
That his innuendoes

Will serve him no longer in verse or in prose;  
For twelve honest men have decided the cause,  
Who are judges alike of the *facts* and the *laws*.

By a not uncommon fate these spirited and argumentative verses, before they passed out of general recollection, were used to demonstrate the contrary to what they said. Lord Mansfield, the judge in the Dean of St Asaph's case, quoted the last line as

Who are judges of facts, though not judges of laws.

It needed a special statute in 1792 to secure the jury full powers in a libel action.

Walpole's monopoly of power did him less harm than his peace-policy. His position as King's Minister, supplemented by the system of corruption, was sufficient to secure him the support, however

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hardwicke, then Attorney-General, prosecuting for the government.

grudging, of the thickheaded squirearchy, who were not easily disturbed by cries of a subverted constitution, when everything went on as usual, and their own ascendancy was unimpaired. But the squirearchy were susceptible on questions of the national honour, and the moneyed men on questions of trade ; and both saw their gods overturned by Walpole's anxiety to keep the peace with Spain. His policy, indeed, was growing out of date, and it may be said that the nation was wiser than he. Fortune varies in her procedure, says Machiavelli somewhere, and men fail through not varying their methods with her. Then, too, a public opinion was growing outside the House. Growing wealth, political campaigns, religious movements, and, we may add, the long line of satires and political ballads, had not been without their effects. The nation outside the political classes possessed of power began to have opinions on current politics ; and those opinions were largely formed by the middle-class of manufacturers, traders and professional men. Already they affected elections and had a leader, the elder Pitt, in the Commons. Here at last was a born ruler, who could not be bribed, and who rested, not on royal support or family connection, but on national opinion. If Walpole supplied one element of the Prime Ministership in being party-leader and possessor of the King's confidence, Pitt introduced another in appealing to popular support.



The first result of this new force was the fall of Walpole in 1742. The King was obliged to part with him, now he could no longer manage the Commons. Walpole and Pulteney retired together to the Lords, and a new ministry was formed. It seems Lord Carteret was the leading spirit in its construction, and some verses full of a vinegary humour, written by Pope's Sporus, Lord Hervey, give us a glimpse of his procedure. They unveil, what was still hidden from vulgar eyes in 1742, the decadence of the monarchy, which had been steadily yielding real control to the Whig oligarchy and its leaders :

Whom they pleased they put in, whom they pleased they  
put out,  
And just like a top they all lash'd him<sup>1</sup> about ;  
Whilst he, like a top, with a murmuring noise,  
Seemed to grumble, but turn'd to these rude, lashing boys.

Further on Carteret speaks—

All that weathercock Pulteney shall ask, we must grant,  
For to make him a great noble nothing I want ;  
And to cheat such a man demands all my arts,  
For though he's a fool, he's a fool with great parts.

And as popular Clodius, the Pulteney of Rome,  
From a noble, for power did plebeian become,  
So this Clodius to be a Patrician shall choose,  
Till what one got by changing, the other shall lose.

Thus flatter'd and courted and gazed at by all,  
Like Phaeton, raised for a day, he shall fall,  
Put the world in a flame, and show he did strive  
To get reins in his hand, though 'tis plain he can't drive.

As these admirable lines show, Walpole had made history in more ways than one. When Queen

<sup>1</sup> The King.

Anne died, no statesman could be banished from the opportunities of power by being promoted to the Lords. Now the Peers were chiefly powerful as great landlords and as borough-owners. Of course Walpole was not the ultimate cause of the change, but he promoted it by his early recognition of the tendency and by basing his position largely on the support of the Commons.

The succeeding ministers found, too, their song-writer to attack them, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. It is, however, only necessary to mention that trivial writer, who carried on the succession of light verse composition with no more than a faculty for glib rhymes and a complete knowledge of the scandals of the day.

The current of light verse turns and eddies with the changes in politics from day to day. Save in connection with the events of which it tells, it is little worth remembering ; yet for that reason it is the aptest, if not the truest or most impressive, comment on them. We are not confused by any power of genius to see below the surface or to ennoble its theme in the transfigurations of art. Thus it has seemed best to give the commonplace productions of party-conflict in their order before proceeding to the series of more ambitious works which lead up to its satiric masterpiece.

Dryden's effect on his contemporaries in the rhyming-trade was so tremendous, that they attacked him in his own words and metre, barely

conscious of the homage they were doing him. Tate of course was his coadjutor in the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*. The only merit of Pordage and Settle, who wrote replies to the *First Part*, lay in their echoes. Shadwell, who imitated less, wrote worse even than they, when he insolently assailed the author of *The Medal*, and provoked the monumental reply, *aere perennius*, *MacFlecknoe*.

One of the best Whig productions of James II's time is *The Character of a Man of No Honour*<sup>1</sup>, from which a fragment may be quoted.

As Heaven has taught the Soul of Man to know,  
Whate'er It pleaseth to dispense below,  
Shall to the advantage of believers tend  
And bless their blind obedience in the end ;  
So we such awful thoughts of you receive,  
Whate'er you'll do, we for our good believe.  
Our grand ambition is our King to please ;  
We ne'er can want repose while he's at ease.  
When by obedience we have given you rest,  
And blasted even the frightful name of Test,  
But smile upon us and your slaves are blest.

This might do for Shadwell at his best, and may serve to show the way Dryden's verse was copied. There is no need to quote from such miserable abuse of Shaftesbury and the Whigs as Otway (1652-85) could write in a long dull ode, or his despicable caricature of the author of the Exclusion Bill in *Venice Preserved*. Later on comes King with a worthless attempt in Oldham's manner against the Duke of Marlborough, and

<sup>1</sup> The *State-Poems* give no author's name.

Defoe's dreary imitation of Dryden, *Jure Divino*, written for the Whigs. Much better is the epigram of Garth (1661—1719), this time actually on the Tory Queen. He addresses France on the peace of Utrecht.

For thee, for thee alone, what could she more?  
 She lost the honour she had gain'd before;  
 Lost all the trophies which her arms had won  
 (Such Caesar never knew, nor Philip's son);  
 Resign'd the glories of a ten years' reign,  
 And such as none but Marlborough's arm could gain;  
 For thee in annals she's content to shine  
 Like other monarchs of the Stuart line.

The crushing mildness of this climax was a fit harbinger of the Hanoverians.

The lesser men under the early Georges are hardly worth referring to. Tickell showed that in heroic couplets he could be as dull as any. Thompson in the stodgy blank verse of his *Britannia* contrived to be both matter-of-fact and unreasonable at the same time, when he attacked Walpole over the Spanish maltreatment of the British mercantile marine. Young, following in his footsteps, gave a model of the forcible-feeble style in his comments on the Young Pretender.

And shall a pope-bred princeling crawl ashore,  
 Replete with venom, guiltless of a sting,—

But it would be absurd to rake over these dead bones any further. Whitehead's *State Dunces* (1733) shows a little more polish of form and a virulence of personal invective pursued *seriatim*;

but his exiguous merit is due to imitation of the reigning literary king, Alexander Pope.

One of Dryden's misfortunes was to be the forerunner of Pope (1688—1744), who outdid him in his own measure and ambitions. If Dryden was lucid, easy, epigrammatic and correct, Pope reached the *ne plus ultra* of these qualities. Dryden was literary dictator for a few years, Pope for several generations. Dryden carried on the reform of the heroic couplet, making it sustained, even and perhaps monotonous. Pope went still further in the rigidity of his verse, and in the perpetual coincidence of the metrical framework, now limited to a narrow orthodoxy, and the syntax of the sentence. Dryden's licences disappear; the Alexandrine follows the *enjambement*. At the same time, in the content of the verse, the later French classicism, with its tinsel mythology, its stilted expressions, and its air of decorous good breeding, comes into full vogue. A crass, prosaic wax it was, which rendered men deaf to the voices, which one would think irresistible, of the older national literature.

Nevertheless in the particular department of political satire, Pope barely comes into competition with Dryden. His health and habits made him somewhat of a recluse, and he was bred a Catholic. It followed that the more noisy, active part of life, and especially politics, were beyond his reach. Besides, the generalizing tendencies of

Ch.  
more  
like D.  
thus des.

his school led him to satirize universal follies and natural whims of character, not to make an indiscriminate assault on all of a different way of thinking. Then the delicacy of his wit and imagination would have been out of place on the hustings. He wrote chiefly for the drawing-room and for the library.

Thus although he so influenced the style of political satirists, he was scarcely one himself. Obviously, some of his victims, like Lord Hervey, were satirized partly for political motives, but politics themselves are kept out of sight. Only at the end of his career does he treat of public affairs, and, as might be expected from the friend of Bolingbroke, allows himself an ironical thrust or so at Sir Robert Walpole and his peace policy and at the prevailing corruption. The acme of these attacks was reached in the *Imitation of Horace's Epistle to Augustus* in 1737. In words of unforgettable mocking adulation Pope celebrated the King and his minister's policy. It is a happy thing, perhaps, that George's insensibility to the Muses prevented his realizing the effect of Pope's corrosive lines, when blatant denunciations would have been long forgotten.

Oh! could I mount on the Maeonian wing,  
Your arms, your actions, your repose to sing!  
What seas you traversed, and what fields you fought!  
Your country's peace, how oft, how dearly bought!  
How barbarous rage subsided at your word,  
And nations wonder'd while they dropp'd the sword!  
How, when you nodded, o'er the land and deep,  
Peace stole her wing, and wrapp'd the world in sleep.

Till earth's extremes your mediation own,  
And Asia's tyrants tremble at your throne.  
But verse, alas! your Majesty disdains;  
And I'm not used to panegyric strains:  
The zeal of fools offends at any time,  
And most of all the zeal of fools in rhyme.  
Besides a fate attends on all I write,  
That when I aim at praise, they say I bite.

In this way the tradition of Dryden attained its highest success. But it was a perilous one. Satire and personal warfare, mingled with didactics, a moral use of tooth and claw, had become the staple of English poetry. They were subjects difficult to redeem from dreariness and unloveliness, even by the master's hand. Unhappily it was Pope's lower merits and qualities which could be imitated, not his brilliance or artistic instinct. The ungracious and the spiteful rushed *en masse* into verse.

The closing years of George II were remarkable for the successes gained by Great Britain. The King himself had, it is true, little to do with them. Not exactly elbowed out of public affairs, he only possessed a subordinate influence. In 1744 he was compelled to dismiss Carteret by the Whig leaders: and his share in the choice of ministers was openly negated in 1746, when they forced him by a simultaneous resignation to admit Pitt to the Cabinet. Although the after-effects of the Jacobite rebellion were to be seen in these events, the cohesion of the Whig party was the main factor. It was evident that the Crown could not resist

them while they held together and there was no alternative. Still George II could find some consolation in foreign affairs. "Though kick'd and cuff'd here, he could there kick and cuff." The diplomatic revolution of 1756, which led up to the Seven Years' War was partly caused by his anxiety to safeguard Hanover. Then the Seven Years' War itself provided an unprecedented series of conquests for England. Her naval supremacy was established. In America and the East Indies she was dominant. The tide of victory in 1760 was still flowing and still being celebrated in patriotic ballads, when George II died and was succeeded by his grandson George III.

George III came to the throne resolved "to be a king." Not that any reversion to pre-revolutionary days was intended by the phrase, but he wished to recover the position held by William III, which had been gradually lost by succeeding sovereigns and more particularly by George II. Now circumstances had changed again in the Crown's favour. The collapse of Jacobitism after the '45 freed the Tories from any disloyal tendency ; and after all their strength in the country, although it had long been of a passive kind, was greater than that of the Whigs. Then the Whig ascendancy largely depended on a Parliamentary combination of great families. It was their solidarity which had humiliated George II in 1746. The whole career, however, of the elder Pitt tended to sap the



foundations of that Parliamentary oligarchy by awakening public opinion outside ; and he further made a beginning in the introduction of an ideal of public purity, which could not but affect a party-machinery dependent on corruption. Add to this, that George III was native-born and popular, not odious and German, and it will be seen that his position was very strong.

For the movement initiated by Pitt, however, the new King had little sympathy. He proposed to resume the patronage of the Crown himself, and to beat the Whigs at their own methods. With the aid of his favourite, Lord Bute, he rapidly undermined the Whig Cabinet he inherited. Pitt was soon resigning, and the titular Prime Minister, Newcastle, was shortly compelled to follow. A Bute Cabinet, directed by the King personally, then entered formally upon its existence with Tory principles, being supported in the Commons by the new party of King's Friends, which was held together by places and pensions, while it advocated the avowable and old principle that the King's Minister should be voted with if reasonably possible.

But George III had made at least three capital mistakes. He missed the support of the better public morality fostered by Pitt, which was outraged to see the King bribing constituencies and carrying corruption as far as ever. He espoused a peace-policy, and soon gave the nation reason to

regret the glorious times just past. And he made a Scot his favourite and Prime Minister, thereby arousing all the ancient dislikes of his English subjects. The lead in opposition to the Court was taken by the notorious Wilkes, who succeeded in extending Whiggism to cover a group of new doctrines on the sovereignty of the people, partly derived from the theories of the French *philosophes*, but also standing in some connection with native-grown public opinion. Now Wilkes, while assaulting Bute in his paper, the *North Briton*, in prose, looked about for a poetical ally; and found what he sought in Charles Churchill.

Churchill (1731-64) had taken Orders for a livelihood, but a loud, bucklike personage such as he was, even in the lax eighteenth century, was not fitted for a clergyman's life, and his unfortunate calling brought him nothing but discredit. His call to write eighteenth-century poetry, however, was quite genuine. He had a masculine, rapid style, with vigorous antitheses and strong movement. Of course he studied Pope; he thought, too, he outdid his predecessor. But in truth he fell hopelessly behind both Pope and Dryden in wit and in humour. Then the charm and imagination of higher poetry are absent in him. Neither had he the poet's judgment or skill to mix his colours. There is a blatant air about him. But he is cutting, and hits hard and straight at the objects of his satire. In short he was just the

man to have a deserved contemporary vogue ; but, perhaps, had little claim to join the immortals.

His first satires were non-political, but, after some months' friendship with Wilkes, he brought out in 1763 an attack on Scotland and Bute, *The Prophecy of Famine*, a rather awkward combination of an epistle and a satiric pastoral. He passes from heavy irony, such as—

To that rare soil, where virtues clust'ring grow,  
What mighty blessings doth not England owe!  
What waggon-loads of courage, wealth and sense,  
Doth each revolving day import from thence!  
To us she gives, disinterested friend!  
Faith without fraud, and Stuarts<sup>1</sup> without end—

to a laboured pleasantry, as in—

Thence simple bards by simple prudence taught,  
To this wise town by simple patrons brought,  
In simple manner utter simple lays,  
And take, with simple pensions, simple praise.

He is much better in a directer style—

They've sense to get what we want sense to keep,  
and becomes amusing when he lets a rough sense of humour have free play, as in his description of the two Scottish "swains":

Jockey, whose manly, highboned cheeks to crown,  
With freckles spotted, flamed the golden down,  
With meikle art could on the bagpipes play,  
E'en from the rising to the setting day:  
Sawney as long without remorse could bawl  
Home's madrigals and ditties from Fingal;  
Oft at his strains, all natural though rude,  
The Highland lass forgot her want of food,  
And, whilst she scratch'd her lover into rest,  
Sunk pleased, though hungry, on her Sawney's breast.

<sup>1</sup> Bute was a Stuart, with numerous kinsmen to promote.

Scotch poverty and Scotland's barrenness form the staple of the poem, but wealthy England is to be placed at their service by Bute's "boundless power, beyond example great."

Once he began to write, Churchill's pen was never long idle. Hogarth about this time included a take-off of Wilkes in a political caricature, getting the likeness, it seems, not in the most delicate manner. Churchill thereupon took up the cudgels for his patron in an *Epistle* to the painter. Some of his most effective lines describe the incoming of Bute's administration.

Through every pannel let thy virtue tell  
How Bute prevail'd, how Pitt and Temple fell!  
How England's sons (whom they conspired to bless,  
Against our will, with insolent success)  
Approve their fall, and with addresses run,  
How got, God knows, to hail the Scottish sun?  
Point out our fame in war, when vengeance hurl'd  
From the strong arm of Justice, shook the world;  
Thine, and thy country's honour to increase,  
Point out the honours of succeeding peace;  
Our moderation, Christian-like, display,  
Shew, what we got, and what we gave away;  
In colours, dull and heavy as the tale,  
Let a state-chaos through the whole prevail.

Churchill had truth to help him here. He was not always so fortunate. His next satire, *The Duellist*, was a long, virulent attack on a minor member of the administration, who had been grossly insulted by Wilkes, and had wounded the latter in the consequent duel. It is more unbalanced in its overcharged invective than the other satires. Of Bishop Warburton he says—

Nor did one spark of grace appear,  
Not one dull, dim spark in his soul ;  
Vice, glorious vice possess'd the whole,  
And, in her service truly warm,  
He was in sin most uniform.

It was an age of savage criticism, Warburton being an offender too ; but this is ridiculous surely. However, Churchill's energy is there, nor does it much flag in his succeeding productions. But they grow less and less political in the concluding months of his life. His extraordinary fertility continued ; even though his works, as Johnson said, were only crab-apples. By the side of the great satirists, of course, he cuts a poor figure ; but he is a burly giant beside his puny rivals in the politics of the early reign of George III.

Such rivals and imitators were Mason (1724-97) and Falconer (1732-69), one a Whig, the other a Tory. Mason, an insipid writer of eclogues, odes and tragedies, veiled his personality under the pseudonym of Malcolm MacGregor for the purpose of political vituperation, but was not less feeble for the change of name. Falconer would be equally unworthy of quotation, did not some lines of his summarize the defects of Pitt's oratory as they seemed to the Vere de Veres of the day.

Methinks I hear the bellowing demagogue  
Dumb-sounding declamations disembogue,  
Expressions of immeasurable length,  
Where pompous jargon fills the place of strength ;  
Where fulminating, rumbling eloquence  
With loud, theatric rage bombards the sense ;  
And words, deep-rank'd in horrible array,  
Exasperated metaphors convey !

As verse or prose this extract is below criticism.

Chatterton (1752-70), too, tried his versatile pen at political satire. In his serious style he is merely a weaker Churchill; but some genius, I think, appears in his *Consuliad*, a description in spirited burlesque of a fight supposed to take place over a ministerial banquet in 1770.

The fight is general; fowl repulses fowl;  
The victors thunder, and the vanquish'd howl.  
Stars, garters, all the implements of show,  
That deck'd the powers above, disgraced below.  
Nor swords, nor mightier weapons did they draw,  
For all were well-acquainted with the law.

But on the whole we have arrived at the un-honoured senility of a once great satiric style. Verse applied to practical, aristocratic life had done its utmost, and the truer poets of the day, Gray and Collins, were returning by however trim and box-edged paths to regions more of the imagination. Eclogue and didactic poem, Chloris and Lydia and their beribboned swains, were indeed to outlast the century, but none the less the Age of China and Gilt gave tokens of its approaching fall.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DAYS OF FOX AND PITT

The squabble between the Court and Wilkes (for in spite of its important results in the increased liberty of the press it could bear no more dignified title) ended in the defeat of the former. Yet although he received temporary checks, by 1770 George III had succeeded in his main object. In that year Lord North held the Prime Ministership, if it could be so called in his hands, as the admitted dependent of the Sovran. So far as power went Bolingbroke's Patriot King seemed likely to come into existence. But public opinion was growing steadily more averse to the system of government by corruption, on which the King's power, like that of his predecessors, the Whigs, rested. The inevitable crisis was first delayed and then precipitated by the American revolt. The King's repressive policy was on the whole popular, and in any case a life and death struggle, such as the war turned out to be, was not likely to foster intestine quarrels. Such of course existed: the Whig

Opposition was for the revolted Colonists, whose principles had a close resemblance to their own. But they only became of first importance in the later years of the war, when it was clear that the mother-country had lost in the contest and was in danger, and that the would-be Patriot King had brought disaster on the state.

Amid the vicissitudes of political events which followed Lord North's fall, two achievements of the Whigs stand out from the rest. The first consisted in the Statutes passed by the Rockingham ministry against the corrupt influence of the Crown in Parliament and in the constituencies. With regard to Parliament they almost commenced a new era; the grosser forms of corruption were put an end to. The constituencies were not so much affected, as borough-owning and private bribery still continued. In the second place a ministry was twice forced on the King by the majority in the Commons. Thus the question which had been in agitation since 1746 seemed settled by 1783 in a sense adverse to the King. The Ministry were Parliament's servants, not his; and at the same time his means of influencing Parliament were much diminished. But George III had no notion of surrender. He bent all his efforts towards expelling from office the Portland Ministry, made up of a coalition of Fox's Whigs and North's ex-Tories. Their unpopular bill for the Government of India offered him his opportunity. By flagrant interference he induced



the Lords to throw it out, dismissed the Coalition, and appointed the younger Pitt Prime Minister. Contrary to expectation the youthful statesman of twenty-five held his own in Parliament against the Coalition : and during the debates a further constitutional problem came to the front. Did the ultimate decision in a dispute between the branches of the legislature lie with the constituencies, or did they give full powers to their representatives without appeal ? Pitt held by the former doctrine, and the General Election of 1784 confirmed it by turning decisively for the King against the Parliamentary majority which he had defied. There was a host of unseated Whigs, known for the future as Fox's Martyrs. The supremacy of the constituencies was established for good. The royal prerogative of choosing the ministry was to be lost another day.

It was the wrath of the defeated Whigs, which gave birth to the series of satires known as the *Rolliad* and its successors, which appeared in the course of 1784 and 1785. These compositions mark a break in the development of English political poetry. They were published in the issues of a daily paper, and the fact itself reveals the greater organization of politics and their greater interest for the general public. Other changes follow this one. The old, formal literary satire with its prolonged invective is submerged for the time. The new style is lively, short and broken ; it has adopted some of

the features of ballad-satires. Then discussion of principles is gone too : the writers of the *Rolliad* confine themselves to personalities, and the latter are as malicious and often as dirty as any of those employed by their predecessors. The fine decorum, which on the whole marks Dryden and Pope and even Churchill, is lost by these active politicians. Their lower tone has been ascribed to the absence of principle and unscrupulousness of the time. It is said politics had become factious. But it may be advanced in defence of the authors of the *Rolliad*, that the difference in principles existing between the Whigs and Tories was very clear. It was : who was to appoint the ministry, King or Parliament? Now the nation had decided for the King, and the Whigs were reduced to showing his incompetence for the responsibility, which they could only do by showing the incompetence of the persons of his choice. Hence came a series of personal attacks on each and every office-holder. That their assaults are often unjust is incidental to an Opposition's profession, ever since Walpole's time at least. That they were often indecent and malignantly personal, is doubtless partly due to the rage of defeat, but also may be put down to the licence of the eighteenth and all preceding centuries, which generally appears in a worse light in second-rate authors, such as the writers of the *Rolliad*, with all their brilliance, were.

It seems that a group of lesser Whigs were the

producers of these celebrated squibs. Two, General Richard Fitzpatrick and Lord John Townshend, were ex-Ministers. George Ellis was an eminent man of letters. Nor were the other allies undistinguished. The scandal they report therefore has some authority about it, and rests on the gossip of the inner circle of politics. That being so, it is surprising, considering how things had been a few years before, how little they have to say against ministerial corruption. Warren Hastings' Indian administration was one vulnerable point, Pitt's personal continence another, while the dissolute life and stupidity of some of his colleagues furnish further opportunities. Yet on the whole even the invective of the *Rolliad* testifies to the higher standard of public life which Rockingham had established.

The immediate occasion of the *Rolliad* was the excitement caused by the unseating of Fox at Westminster in consequence of a rather vindictive petition. One Tory member, Mr Rolle of Devon, particularly irritated the Opposition by his intervention in the debate which followed : it is said he was already in disfavour with them by his habit of coughing during Burke's speeches. In any case his insignificant personality was taken as figure-head for the new satire. As mentioned above, a novel form was invented for the occasion. It was feigned that an epic of genius had just appeared, dealing with the fortunes of Rollo, a Norman Duke,

ancestor of Mr Rolle, and from time to time the literary enthusiasm of the Whig *Morning Post* placed excerpts from the work, with criticisms, before its readers. As may be supposed, the events of 1784-5 necessitated additions to the epic, which were forthwith chronicled and praised. These political passages were quoted from its sixth book—for the *Rolliad* carefully follows the *Aeneid*—where Rollo beholds his descendant in Parliament; but they soon had to be supplemented by the prophecy of the “dying drummer” (slain at Hastings) which deals more especially with the House of Lords.

This was the method. The execution is often admirable. Its mocking fun (so different from the tragedy-airs of Churchill) may be seen in the character of Pitt, the marvellous boy of politics. It is attributed to Ellis.

Pert without fire, without experience sage,  
 Young with more arts than Shelburne glean'd from age,  
 Too proud from pilfer'd greatness to descend,  
 Too humble not to call Dundas his friend,  
 In solemn dignity and sullen state,  
 This new Octavius rises to debate!  
 Mild and more mild he sees each placid row  
 Of Country Gentlemen with rapture glow;  
 He sees convulsed with sympathetic throbs  
 Apprentice-peers and deputy-Nabobs!  
 Nor Rum-contractors think his speech too long,  
 While words, like treacle, trickle from his tongue!

The Minister's peer-creating propensities, really a substitute for pensions and the like, were evidently known already. As a criticism on his oratory this

passage is much excelled by a prose comment elsewhere.

“Longinus, as the learned well know, reckons the figure amplification amongst the principal sources of the sublime, as does Quintilian amongst the leading requisites of rhetoric. That it constitutes the very soul of eloquence, is demonstrable from the example of that sublimest of all orators and profoundest of all statesmen, Mr William Pitt. If no expedient had been devised, by the help of which the *same* idea could be invested in a thousand different and glittering habiliments, by which *one* small spark of meaning could be inflated into a blaze of elocution, how many delectable speeches would have been lost to the Senate of Great Britain? How severe an injury would have been sustained to the literary estimation of the age?”

As may be seen from this specimen the prose of the *Rolliad* must be taken into account in judging of its merits; for it is not infrequently better than the verse.

Besides set characters like that of Pitt, the *Rolliad* abounds in shorter squibs at the expense of his supporters. Some of these are clownish enough, like that on Grenville's head: but there is an artistic venom in the assault on Dundas, Pitt's intimate friend:

Whose exalted soul  
No bonds of vulgar prejudice control.  
Of shame unconscious in his bold career,  
He spurns that honour which the weak revere;  
For true to public Virtue's patriot plan,  
He loves the *Minister* and not the *Man*.

Then it is hard to say whether poor Mr Secretary Orde or Lord Mulgrave had crueller measure meted out to him. The former is described thus:

Tall and erect, unmeaning, mute and pale,  
O'er his blank face no gleams of thought prevail.

while as to the latter's speech—

within his labouring throat  
The shrill shriek struggles with the harsh, hoarse note.

The metrical comedy of the last line is due to the learned George Ellis, as one might expect.

Part of the satire is retrospective, and refers to the personal pressure the King exercised on the Lords to make them reject Fox's India Bill. The Marquess of Buckingham, then Earl Temple, had been the King's envoy and adviser at the decisive moment; and the decorous Whig satirist (Ellis) assigns him an even more important part than he played in fact.

On the great day, when Buckingham by pairs  
Ascended, Heaven-impell'd, the K—'s backstairs;  
And panting, breathless, strain'd his lungs to show  
From Fox's Bill what mighty ills would flow:  
That soon, *its source corrupt, Opinion's thread*  
*On India deleterious streams would shed*;  
That Hastings, Munny Begum, Scott<sup>1</sup> must fall,  
And Pitt and Jenkinson<sup>2</sup> and Leadenhall;  
Still as with stammering tongue he told his tale,  
Unusual terrors Brunswick's heart assail;  
Wide starts his white wig from his royal ear,  
And each particular hair stands stiff with fear.

For ironic mock-heroics it would be difficult to beat the *Rolliad*. Of its humour one would think the apostrophe (Fitzpatrick's) to the Bishops, who voted steadily Tory, is the best instance.

You reverend prelates, robed in sleeves of lawn,  
Too meek to murmur, and too proud to fawn,  
Who, still submissive to their Maker's nod,  
Adore their Sovran, and respect their God;  
And wait, good men! all worldly things forgot,  
In humble hope of Enoch's happy lot.

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' agent.

<sup>2</sup> Leader of King's Friends.

The vogue of the *Rolliad* soon wore out, but not the Whigs' desire for revenge. The criticism of the epic was succeeded by a series of *Political Eclogues*. One of these, *The Liars*, by Fitzpatrick, surpasses the rest in point and in the virulence of its wit. Two Tory underlings, Dr Prettyman, a clergyman, and Banks, a member of Parliament, strive, like Corydon and Lacon, in Pitt's presence, each extolling his own variety of lie.

*Banks.*      O witless lout! in lies that touch the state,  
We, Country Gentlemen, have far more weight;  
Fiction from us the public still must gull;  
They think we're honest, as they know we're dull.

*Prettyman.* How smooth, persuasive, plausible and glib,  
From holy lips is dropp'd the specious fib!  
Which, whisper'd slyly, in its dark career  
Assails with art the unsuspecting ear.

*Banks.*      How clear, convincing, eloquent and bold,  
The bare-faced lie, with manly courage told!  
Which, spoke in public, falls with greater force  
And, heard by hundreds, is believed of course.

There is a kind of impersonal, cynical wisdom here, besides personal malice. Fitzpatrick was an old Parliamentary hand.

Irresponsible gaiety marks another Eclogue. George III has not been killed by Margaret Nicholson, and Lord Hawkesbury (late Jenkinson, leader of the King's Friends) rejoices.

Hence, dire illusions! dismal scenes away—  
Again he cries, "What, what!" and all is gay.  
Come, Brunswick, come, great king of loaves and fishes;  
Be bounteous still to grant us all our wishes!

The same spirit of fun dominates in the next

effort of the Rolliad-clique, *The Probationary Odes for the Laureateship*, which just then happened to be vacated. That attributed to Major John Scott, M.P., Hastings' agent, is one of the more playful :

Grand is thy form,—'bout five feet ten,  
 Thou well-built, worthiest, best of men!  
 Thy chest is stout, thy back is broad,—  
 Thy pages view thee and are awed!  
 Lo! how thy white eyes roll!  
 Thy whiter eyebrows stare!  
 Honest soul!  
 Thou'rt witty, as thou'rt fair!

It must be admitted that this was a mild revenge for its author, Townshend, to take for George's intrigues; but it was none the less deadly, for it pointed the criticism: was Farmer George fit to govern England?

Another ode, purporting to be written by Viscount Mountmorres, really by Fitzpatrick, reminds us of the elder Tickell on the Highlanders. There is the same pleasantry and the same contempt for the Kelt, this time the Irish Volunteers.

Full fifty thousand men we show  
 All in our Irish manufactures clad,  
 Whaling, manœuvring to and fro,  
 And marching up and down like mad.  
 In Fradon's holy cause the bellow, rant and rave,  
 And scorn themselves to know what they themselves  
 would have!

The *Odes* practically close the satires connected with the *Rolliad*, for we need not delay over the more trivial and viler *Miscellanies*. The whole



series holds a peculiar position. [In political literature they started a new and flippant style, and we have every reason to be thankful that they drove sham-solemnity, sham-virtue and sham-heroics off the stage. But politically they were the most ineffectual of productions.] The King and Minister remained in power. In essence they were only a protest against a *fait accompli*. So for their own day they were no better than brilliant fireworks, and in ours they are fireworks extinguished. The reason partly lies in their malign scurrility. The great minister they attacked stands cold in marble beneath the coloured light in the Guildhall. What do we want with the refuse that was flung at him by angry rivals? In his subordinates we feel little interest, and we are inclined to disbelieve the slanders of political warfare. To conclude, the fate of the *Rolliad* shows once more the disadvantage in literature of a lack of magnanimity.

Although the circle that produced the *Rolliad* fell asunder, a small shred of their mantle fell on a succeeding unitary bard. The Rev. John Wolcott (1738—1819), better known by his pseudonym of Peter Pindar, was a man far more discreditable to his cloth than honest Churchill was. Peter's object in life was to make a comfortable living, and his tastes in life were low. However, after many attempts he "struck oil." He was a born humourist and the very best of English carica-

turists in verse. He found his talent in a satire on the Royal Academicians of his time, and from that theme was easily led on to scoff at their patron, the King. To do him justice, it cannot be denied that he was a good judge of painting, and that the King was not. Perhaps he took his cue from the *Rolliad*—it was in 1785 that he fastened on his royal victim—for one or two pieces in that collection show a similar vein of parody. But if so he bettered his model. His motive seems merely to have been the fact that there was a good sale for squibs on royalty, especially among the indignant Whigs. Then, too, George III's oddities of speech and action furnished a tempting opportunity. So Peter set to work and joyfully exploited the echoes of the servants' hall at Windsor.

His first attempt, the *Lousiad*, is a rather wearisome mock-heroic poem, but *Ode upon Ode*, a counterblast to the Laureate's yearly performance, shows him at his best in sportive, yet ungenial caricature. One passage is justly celebrated :

To whom<sup>1</sup> a certain sage so earnest cried,  
 "Don't mind,—don't mind—the rogues their aim have  
 miss'd—

Don't fear your place, whilst I am well supplied—  
 But mind, mind poverty of the Civil List.

"Swear that no K—g's so poor upon the globe;  
 Compare me—yes, compare me to poor Job.  
 The House will credit thee—I know the ninnies,  
 And wife and I are fond of bags of guineas.

<sup>1</sup> Pitt.

"What? What, Pitt—hae? We must have t'other grant.  
What, what? You know, Pitt, that my old, dead Aunt,  
Left not a sixpence, Pitt, these eyes to bless,  
But from the parish saved that fool at Hesse.

"But mind me—hae, to plague her heart when dying,  
I was a constant hunter—Nimrod still;  
And when in state as dead's a mackerel lying,  
I cared not, for I knew the Woman's *Will*.

"And three days after my old Aunt was dead,  
Which some folks thought prodigiously profane,  
I took it—yes—I took it in my head,  
To order Sir John Brute at Drury Lane.

"Had she respected *me*, I do aver,  
I should have stay'd at home and thought of *her*."

It will be seen that, though Wolcott's motives were basely private, his satire had a distinctly public trend. George III's demands for money to pay the debts of his Civil List were rendered all the more remarkable by the narrow economy of the Royal Household. In fact the money went in corruption. The King took a keen interest in elections, and, while parsimonious in his personal expenses, made the country provide for the bribery of its constituencies. But what George III gained in this way he partly lost through his consequent reputation for avarice, in which the Queen, who of course shared specially in the smaller economies, took more than her fair share of blame. And in truth both the royal pair made their savings with manifest enjoyment.

Peter Pindar did not confine himself to parody; but he excelled rather in humour than in wit, and few isolated passages are worth citing. Still his character of Charles II is excellent and even wise,

giving through a kind of sympathy the secret of that monarch's popularity.

As for John Dryden's Charles—that King  
 Indeed was never any mighty thing—  
 He merited few honours from the pen—  
 (And yet he was a devilish hearty fellow,  
 Enjoyed his girl and bottle—and got mellow—  
 And *mind*—kept company with gentlemen.

The last stab at George III comes with a witty surprise ; but it has, and this is frequent with Wolcott, more the substance than the form of wit. You must know the surrounding circumstances to appreciate it. No one was so good at conveying a gesture in words as Peter ; but a gesture in itself is a mere contortion. He could, however, scoff as smartly as a Restoration wit. The following is a specially good, if rather learned instance, the short last line enforcing the climax :

But p'rhaps aloft on his imperial throne,  
 So distant, O ye Gods, from every one ;  
 The royal virtues are, like many a star,  
 From this our pigmy system rather far ;  
 Whose light, though flying ever since creation,  
 Hath not yet pitch'd upon our nation.

Even here the general conception, so skilfully brought out by one or two sly colloquial words among the *mots nobles* of the eighteenth century, is what we most laugh at, and Peter Pindar's political masterpiece is, I think, to be found in a piece of broad comedy, Gillray in verse,—the King at Whitbread's brewery :

Now Mr Whitbread, serious, did declare,  
 To make the Majesty of England stare,  
 That he had butts enough, he knew,  
 Placed side by side, would reach along to Kew.

On which the King with wonder swiftly cried,  
 "What if they reach to Kew then, side by side,  
     What would they do, what, what, placed end to end?"  
 To whom, with knitted, calculating brow,  
 The Man of Beer most solemnly did vow,  
     Almost to Windsor that they would extend;  
 On which the King with *wondering* mien,  
 Repeated it unto the *wondering* Queen.

From these mock-heroics on the inanity of conversation-making, Peter proceeds to a rollicking imitation (parody was hardly needed) of the royal manner :

Now did his Majesty so gracious say  
 To Mr Whitbread in his flying way,  
     "Whitbread, d'ye nick the exciseman now and then?  
 Hae, Whitbread, when d'ye think to leave off trade?  
 Hae, what? Miss Whitbread's still a maid, a maid?  
     What, what's the matter with the men?"  
 "D'ye hunt?—hae, hunt? No, no, you are too old—  
     You'll be Lord Mayor—Lord Mayor one day—  
 Yes, yes, I've heard so,—yes, yes, so I'm told:  
     Don't, don't the fine for sheriff pay—  
 I'll prick you every year, man, I declare;  
 Yes, Whitbread—yes, yes,—you shall be Lord Mayor.  
 "Whitbread, d'ye *keep* a coach or *job* one, pray?  
     Job, job, that's cheapest—yes, that's best, that's best—  
 You put your liveries on your draymen—hae?  
     Hae, Whitbread?—You have feather'd well your nest?  
 What is the price, now, hae, of all your stock?  
 But, Whitbread, what's o'clock, pray, what's o'clock?"

It would seem that no reverence or popularity could survive such a storm of ridicule, and indeed the King's were damaged for a time; and Wolcott refused a pension which was proffered to buy him off. But he overshot the mark. He added dull invective to his fun. The very success of his satire made the King more careful in offending public opinion, and the tide quite turned on the occasion

of his madness in 1788. An excuse was thus provided for his eccentricities, while the conduct, then, before and after, of the Prince of Wales made the nation disgusted with the hope of the Whigs. Peter Pindar's forecast lost verisimilitude.

Behold! the sceptre young Augustus sways;  
I hear the mingled praise of millions rise;  
I see upraised to Heaven their ardent eyes;  
That for their monarch ask a length of days.

George III was at least a decent man, with principles, who took life seriously. Then his choice of a Prime Minister was proved to be good by events. For the first time a Hanoverian monarch had achieved a real and overwhelming popularity. Wolcott, it is true, recommenced his attacks at a later date, after a fresh break-down in a negotiation for a pension; but he was finally snuffed out by the mightier satire of the *Anti-Jacobin*.

It would be difficult to find a period of years, which could not with some justice be named an era of transition. The new is always appearing, developing and supplanting the old. But the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries have an unusual claim to the appellation. The older framework of society did indeed break up over a large part of Europe, and new was substituted; nor could any amount of restoration alter the fact. The great engine in this work of destruction and renovation was the French Revolution. Even in England, where the Industrial Revolution had more immediate practi-

cal results, the French upheaval was more creative in its influence on ideas. That and its after-movements affected English literature and thought to an extraordinary degree, and even its political effects, obscurer and partly proceeding as they did by way of reaction and indirect consequence, have coloured subsequent history. It is true that the share of the French in the origin of the separate ideas they did so much to propagate can easily be exaggerated. They did not invent the notions of personal and political liberty for the modern world: these had been put into practice in England and the United States already. Equality was the watchword of Joseph II of Austria. Then the Industrial Revolution which had so much influence on the later development of the Revolutionary creed had its home in Great Britain. But the French added the tenet of Fraternity with its satellites of cosmopolitanism and national solidarity; and they made the whole into a kind of religion. This was indeed new to the sceptical eighteenth-century with its society cleft by secular fissures. One might conclude perhaps that a religion was necessary to mankind, and that, incredulous of all the faiths they knew, they made a religion of politics.

There is no need to rehearse here the cataclysms of the years following 1789, but two aspects of events have to be noted. First, that France became a violently aggressive state, making her wars in the name of the Revolutionary propaganda.

Secondly, that propaganda made some converts in Great Britain. Thus England was forced into hostilities in self-defence ; and found herself troubled with internal dissensions. It goes without saying that the Whigs only approved of part of the Jacobin's proceedings ; but there were also underlings, crack-brained theorists, industrial agitators, who admired every step of the Revolution and advocated its literal repetition in England without even the excuses that can be made for the Reign of Terror. The net result of these two causes was that England's resistance, also, to the Revolution, within and without, had a semi-religious emotional tendency. Law, established order, national tradition and institutions now found their devotees ; and in England these were aristocratic traditions, tinged with monarchism. The greater part of the English oligarchy, the great families, the country-squires, even the merchants, rallied round Pitt, prepared to resist to the uttermost. It is perhaps Pitt's greatest merit, that he rose to the occasion, and held out for only such a peace as would be permanent for Europe and secure the national growth of England on national lines.

But—in this very unlike their opponents—the English squires were mostly voiceless, and the merit of creating a voice for them is mostly Canning's (1770—1827), the future Prime Minister, then a brilliant henchman of Pitt. There was the *Rolliad* to point the way, and the lively variety of



many writers of talent might in a journalistic age fill the place of a genius such as Dryden's. This was all the more necessary as political warfare was itself becoming more and more a matter of rapid thrust and parry in Parliament and in the country. Thus the method devised for the propaganda of the new Toryism was the foundation of a weekly newspaper, *The Anti-Jacobin*. Besides the usual contents of a journal, the new publication was especially to be devoted to the contradiction of statements by the other side, and to the systematic ridicule of any prominent person affected to the new views, to the new heresy, perhaps one should say. In consequence the *Anti-Jacobin* shares some characteristics of theological writings. Its satire and polemic are raised to a nobler plane by the conviction that the holiest possessions and the happiness of mankind depend on the success of the cause it represents. With this is linked the belief that its opponents are criminals or madmen whom good men must oppose on any subject and on any ground, however remote from those in dispute. We detect in reading it a certain bigotry and a certain moral fervour unknown to the malicious *Rolliad*.

Its editor was Gifford, afterwards editor of the *Quarterly Review* and already known as a successful literary satirist ; but its mainstay was Canning himself, who contributed by far the best of the weekly incidental verse, the only portion of the

contents which falls within the scope of the present essay. His most brilliant lieutenants were John Hookham Frere and George Ellis, the latter of whom had been a contributor to the *Rolliad* before he became a supporter of Pitt in the Whig secession of 1794. All of these four were happy writers of correct verse ; all of them had wit and sense and conviction and the fighting instinct. The latter quality was by no means the least necessary, for the times of 1797 were critical. Cash payments had been suspended at the Bank of England. It was the year of the Mutiny of the seamen at the Nore. Ireland was seething with discontent, and to crown all the French arms were gaining one success after another on the Continent. Never was there greater need, or it must be said greater opportunity to rally patriotic opinion and to hearten the national resistance.

The first victims of the *Anti-Jacobin's* poetical satire were the members of the Lake School. Most, if not all, of these had been ardent Revolutionaries, and were at that very time in process of disillusionment. But the *Anti-Jacobin* cared little for their change of views, if it knew of the fact, and, besides, even when converted they were constant enemies of Pitt, who had warred with and, as they thought, warped the development of their beloved republic. In the same year Coleridge wrote of the Prime Minister in a fierce, denunciatory eclogue, *Fire, Famine and Slaughter*—

*Famine.* Whisper it, sister! so and so!  
In a dark hint, soft and slow.

*Slaughter.* Letters four do form his name—  
And who sent you?

*Both.* The same! the same!

*Slaughter.* He came by stealth, and unlock'd my den,  
And I have drunk the blood since then  
Of thrice three hundred thousand men.

*Both.* Who bade you do't?

*Slaughter.* The same! the same!  
Letters four do form his name.  
He let me loose, and cried Halloo!  
To him alone the praise is due.

In spite of its curious poetic charm, some retaliation was not misplaced for this kind of thing. The verses of the Lake Poets, too, were the accredited productions of the new, strange way of thinking, with its return to nature and revolt from tradition. Canning with great shrewdness seized on the weakest of the school, Southey, who also had committed the crime of writing the democratic tragedy of *Wat Tyler*. The future Laureate never ceased to lay himself open to criticism by a singular want of judgment in theme and treatment, but he further betrayed himself by attempting to write in classic metres, Sapphics and the like. He did not try to do much more than copy the rhythm, but even that modest ambition had no success, while the quantities are capriciously disarranged. One of Canning's parodies of him is the best production of the whole *Anti-Jacobin*. It is the classic *Needy Knife-grinder*. The verses are not much more correct Sapphics than Southey's, but their rhythm goes

dy  
knife  
13  
better, and the whole turn of the verse harmonizes delightfully with the satiric humour of the sense. Southey was not substantial enough to furnish a full subject for a parody, and Canning wisely took the opportunity to ridicule all the favourite philanthropic declamations of the Revolutionaries. So famous a composition must be given in full in spite of its familiarity. The Friend of Humanity addresses the Knife-grinder :

Needy Knife-grinder ! Whither are you going ?  
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order—  
Bleak blows the blast ; your hat has got a hole in't,  
So have your breeches !

Weary Knife-grinder ! little think the proud ones,  
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike-  
Road, what hard work 'tis crying all day "Knives and  
Scissors to grind O !"

Tell me, Knife-grinder, how you came to grind knives ?  
Did some rich man tyrannically use you ?  
Was it the squire ? or parson of the parish ?  
Or the attorney ?

Was it the squire, for killing of his game ? or  
Covetous parson, for his tithes distraining ?  
Or roguish lawyer, made you lose your little  
All in a lawsuit ?

(Have you not read the Rights of Man, by Tom Paine ?)  
Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,  
Ready to fall, as soon as you have told your  
Pitiful story.

### The Knife-grinder replies—

Story ! God bless you ! I have none to tell, sir,  
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,  
This poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were  
Torn in a scuffle.

Constables came up for to take me into  
Custody ; they took me before the Justice ;  
Justice Oldmixon put me in the parish-  
Stocks for a vagrant.

I should be glad to drink your Honour's health in  
 A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;  
 But for my part I never love to meddle  
     With politics, sir.

Friend of Humanity:

I give thee sixpence! I will see thee damn'd first—  
 Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance—  
 Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,  
     Spiritless outcast!

[Kicks the Knife-grinder, overturns his wheel, and exit  
 in a transport of Republican enthusiasm and universal philan-  
 thropy.]

The humour of the *Needy Knife-grinder* is of  
 that fine variety which does not depend on place  
 and time; yet I think it owes some of its present  
 charm to the aroma of old-fashioned scholarship  
 that lingers round it, suggestive of the bare  
 mahogany and conversation over "the walnuts and  
 the wine." ┘

But such playful scorn was not the habitual  
 temper of the *Anti-Jacobin*. Its more permanent  
 attitude is well shown in Lord Morpeth's translation  
 of some fine Latin hexameters on France by the  
 future Marquess Wellesley.

Where'er her banners float in barbarous pride,  
 Where'er her conquest rolls its sanguine tide,  
 There the fair fabric of establish'd law,  
 There social order, and religious awe,  
 Sink in the general wreck; indignant there  
 Honour and Virtue fly the tainted air;  
 Fly the mild duties of domestic life  
 That cheer the parent, that endear the wife,  
 The lingering pangs of kindred grief assuage,  
 Or soothe the sorrows of declining age.

These lines are spirited and felt, if they have not  
 the terseness of their original.

The purpose of the *Anti-Jacobin* was far from being confined to a merely political satire. The social and literary theories which went along with the Revolutionary tendency were equally attacked by it. The English Lake Poets, as we have seen, suffered in Southey's person. But much more obnoxious to the defenders of the old order were the English Revolutionary *Philosophes*, such as Payne Knight, who pursued a very pallid light of Reason among tame eighteenth-century couplets, and the German proto-Romanticists, like Goethe, Schiller and their followers, who, freeing themselves from classic French conventions and traditions, indulged occasionally in works, the moral and artistic principles of which bordered on the fantastic. The influence of the German Romanticists, epoch-making for Europe as it was, became indeed most fruitful for good in English literature later, when it had passed through the work of Scott with its peculiar moral sanity, and when it had combined with the thoroughly national movement of the Lake Poets. But those developments were still to come in 1797; and Canning's verses *The Progress of Man*, which ridiculed Payne Knight's didactic style, and the play of *The Rovers*, offspring of several hands, which performed the same office for the wilder German drama, will gain the sympathy of most readers of poetry. Canning laments, somewhat after Rousseau, the way Man has deserted his "state of nature."

Ah! who has seen the mailéd lobster rise,  
 Clap her broad wings, and soaring claim the skies?  
 When did the owl, descending from her bow'r,  
 Crop, 'midst the fleecy flocks, the tender flow'r;  
 Or the young heifer plunge, with pliant limb,  
 In the salt wave, and fish-like strive to swim?

The same with plants—potatoes 'tatoes breed—  
 Uncostly cabbage springs from cabbage-seed;  
 Lettuce to lettuce, leeks to leeks succeed;  
 Nor e'er did cooling cucumbers presume  
 To flow'r like myrtle, or like violets bloom.  
 —Man only—rash, refined, presumptuous man,  
 Starts from his rank, and mars creation's plan.  
 Born the free heir of nature's wide domain,  
 To art's strict limits bounds his narrow'd reign;  
 Resigns his native rights for meaner things,  
 For faith and fetters—laws, and priests, and kings.

In the same delightful vein the associates of the *Anti-Jacobin* make an assault on another didactic poet of the day, Mr Darwin. This otherwise forgotten writer has been actually preserved to memory by the parody<sup>1</sup>, like a fly in amber. But the very celebrity of the mocking *Loves of the Triangles*, taken together with its non-political character, prevents quotation from it here. Only I may cite its last lines, political and not so familiar as the rest.

Ye Sylphs of Death! on demon pinions flit  
 Where the tall guillotine is raised for Pitt:  
 To the poised plank tie fast the monster's back,  
 Close the nice slider, ope the expectant sack;  
 Then twitch, with fairy hands, the frolic pin—  
 Down falls the impatient axe with deafening din;  
 The liberated head rolls off below,  
 And simpering Freedom hails the happy blow.

There is a gruesome realism under the mockery, which reminds us that these men had lived through

<sup>1</sup> Hannay, "English Political Satires," *Quarterly Review*, 1857.

the Terror and might well ask if any good thing could come from France.

The extravaganza of *The Rovers* indulges in a lighter raillery, all the absurdities of the German drama being heaped together skilfully enough, but Goethe and Schiller have an interest with us which Darwin has not, and it is not so easy to sympathize perfectly with the derisive and not wholly unjustifiable jeers with which they were greeted by the *Anti-Jacobin*. That journal, however, was near its end in its original form. Its work was accomplished. Its personalities and licence, though in the verse they are far less than those of the *Rolliad*, thirteen years before, were giving offence. It was as well too sparkling for a rising English statesman to be connected with. Pitt saw the time had come to discontinue it, and it accordingly ceased to exist as a ministerial production.

Before its career closed, Canning and his friends discharged a final broadside in *The New Morality*. Unlike its predecessors, this piece is a set satire in the manner of Pope and Churchill. Of course it is inferior to the former's productions, and it is in general more prosaic than the latter's. Yet it has a wit and humour and ardour of conviction that raise it above such compositions as Churchill and his followers could achieve. What a telling scorn is that expressed for those Whigs, like Fox, who were little disturbed by patriotic bias !



No narrow bigot *he*;—his reason'd view  
 Thy interests, *England*, ranks with thine, *Peru*!  
*France* at our doors, *he* sees no danger nigh,  
 But heaves for *Turkey's* woes th' impartial sigh;  
 A steady patriot of the world alone,  
 The friend of every country—but his own.

Even this is excelled by the triumphant scorn  
 poured on the Lake Poets and their sensibility,  
 while perhaps the most famous lines of all are  
 those which describe the crossbencher and the  
 impartial historian.

"Much may be said on both sides."—Hark! I hear  
 A well-known voice that murmurs in my ear,—  
 The voice of Candour.—Hail! most solemn sage,  
 Thou drivelling virtue of this moral age,  
 Candour, which softens party's headlong rage.  
 Candour,—which spares its foes;—nor e'er descends  
 With bigot zeal to combat for its friends.  
 Candour, which loves in see-saw strain to tell  
 Of *acting foolishly*, but *meaning well*;  
 Too nice to praise by wholesale, or to blame,  
 Convinced that *all men's motives* are the same;  
 And finds with keen, discriminating sight,  
 Black's not *so black*;—nor white *so very white*.

"Fox, to be sure, was vehement and wrong:  
 But then, Pitt's words, you'll own, were *rather* strong.  
 Both must be blamed, both pardon'd; 'twas just so  
 With Fox and Pitt full forty years ago!  
 So Walpole, Pulteney;—factions in all times  
 Have had their follies, ministers their crimes."

Give me th' avowed, th' erect, the manly foe,  
 Bold I can meet—perhaps may turn his blow;  
 But of all plagues, good Heaven, thy wrath can send,  
 Save, save, oh! save me from the Candid Friend!

"Barras loves plunder, Merlin takes a bribe,—  
 What then!—Shall Candour these good men proscribe?  
 No! ere we join the loud-accusing throng,  
 Prove,—not the facts,—but that *they thought them wrong*.

"Why hang O'Quigley?—He, misguided man,  
 In sober thought his country's weal *might* plan:  
 And while his deep-wrought Treason sapp'd the throne,  
*Might* act from *taste in morals*, all his own."

No one, I think, would deny that Canning's Muse

was robust, and perhaps he pronounces the general judgment of men on the half-hearted and those who attempt the thankless task of disturbing Truth in her lonely meditations. The lines were long a common-place and furnished the subject for a famous passage-at-arms between Peel and Disraeli. But one likes to think of Canning in connection with feelings and views more out of date. He is one of those men who gain by being strictly kept amid the surroundings of their time. As we have seen, there was no philosophic detachment in him; he was full of insular patriotism, and gives noble expression to it in the concluding lines of *The New Morality*.

Guard we but our own Hearts: with constant view  
To ancient morals, ancient manners true;  
True to the manlier virtues, such as nerved  
Our fathers' breasts, and this proud Isle preserved  
For many a rugged age: and scorn the while  
Each philosophic atheist's specious guile;  
The soft seductions, the refinements nice,  
Of gay Morality and easy Vice;  
So shall we brave the storm; our 'stablish'd pow'r  
Thy refuge, Europe, in some happier hour.  
But French *in heart*, though Victory crown our brow,  
Low at our feet though prostrate nations bow,  
Wealth gild our cities, Commerce crowd our shore,  
London may shine, but England is no more!

Though Canning's *Anti-Jacobin* ceased, there was a continuance of Tory productions of the same kind for some years. To judge from the specimens given by Mr Edmonds<sup>1</sup>, they were written with an ever increasing vulgarity and virulence of bigotry. English politics were coming under the guidance

<sup>1</sup> *The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, third edition, 1890.

of smaller men than Fox and Pitt. The national energies, too, were absorbed in the war. Then Napoleon's despotism had confused the issues. It was no longer a question of popular rights and the millennium versus tradition and aristocracy, but of a national struggle against an aggressive world-empire. Thus the best conditions for effective political satire were wanting.

Besides the *Anti-Jacobin* succession, there are wrecks of decadent ballads, but Scott's *Health to Lord Melville* is the composition nearest to the great style, and even that owes its chief merit, not to any depreciation of the Whigs, but to the famous line on Pitt—but lately dead,

Low lies the pilot that weather'd the storm,  
and after all the phrase was Canning's.

## CHAPTER VI

### MOORE, PRAED AND THE MODERN MOCKERY IN RHYME

In the year 1811 the prospects of the Whigs seemed suddenly to brighten. This was not due to public feeling or to the course of the war. The nation remained stubbornly anti-Napoleonic, and the monarchic Tories remained firm in its favour and in that of the King. And if the Continental system of the French Emperor put a severe strain on England's resources, her fleet was supreme on the seas, and the series of Peninsular victories had already commenced. But in 1811 George III finally lost his reason, and the Whig Prince of Wales was soon to have the full royal authority as Regent. It was expected that he would place his friends of the Opposition in power, and that they would have an opportunity of governing the country on principles, both freer and more progressive than those of the Tories in general. Great was to be their disappointment. The Prince Regent had probably never had any sincere political principles

at all, and his position in 1811-2 was not favourable for a radical change of national policy. He was locum tenens for his father, and George III had already twice recovered from attacks of insanity. Then Napoleon's power was beginning to wane and the rule of the Tories, in spite of various blunders, was being more and more justified by success. Under these circumstances the Prince made a feeble tentative. In a letter to his brother, the Duke of York, he proposed the formation of a coalition Cabinet of both parties. But he forgot, if he had ever realized the fact, that the Whigs had grounds of principle for desiring office, and just expectations of obtaining it from him. Since the Union with Ireland Roman Emancipation had become a pressing question, and in spite of the fact that some influential Tories were in favour of the measure it was on the whole opposed by ministers and supported by the Opposition. In consequence, the Whig leaders would be stultified by entering an administration of dilated Toryism; and as the former political confidants of the Prince Regent, they felt insulted by the offer of an office or two. The final result was that Lord Liverpool became Prime Minister in 1812 at the head of a purely Tory Cabinet.

Thus the Prince Regent's action only served to accentuate party-divisions. The Whigs had made another step towards modern Liberalism; the Tories were more identified with a reactionary policy under the leadership of Liverpool and Castlereagh

than they had been. It might be expected that party-warfare would become brisker ; and that there would be greater powers displayed in satiric compositions. And so it happened. The Whigs had obtained a new poet in the person of Thomas Moore (1779—1852). Moore was an Irish Catholic of liberal tendencies, and already a celebrated song-writer. He was therefore a very fit person, both by convictions and talent, to avenge the Whigs on their quondam patron. Very wisely he delivered most of his attacks in various lyric metres of which he was a master, or in comic octosyllabics, recalling Tickell's *Prophecy*, which admirably suited his style of witty persiflage. When he attempted more serious denunciation in the style of Churchill, he was less successful. His talent lay in a gay and not very savage mockery, a cross between Peter Pindar and the lighter moods of the *Anti-Jacobin*. It might seem ineffective at first sight ; but it was written in the spirit of a gentleman, and conformed to the new standard of decency. The victim found himself covered with a ridicule which could seldom be denounced for ill-taste or malignity. Moore was fortunate, too, in his first subject. The Prince had no man's respect or liking. The truth of the parody Moore put into his mouth was too well-known.

I am proud to declare I have no predilections;  
 My heart is a sieve, where some scatter'd affections  
 Are just danced about for a moment or two,  
 And, the finer they are, the more sure to run through.

Moore pursued his attack on the Regent in his *Twopenny Postbag* published in 1813. This was a series of rhymed epistles, purporting to be derived from the private correspondence of various high personages. The best, partly because the pleasantest, is perhaps that from the Prince's Equerry to a worthy Tory, who had written a book in favour of increasing the power of the Sovran. An extract will show its quality :

But—to your work's immortal credit—  
 The P—e, good sir, the P—e has read it;  
 (The only book, himself remarks,  
 Which he has read since Mrs Clarke's)<sup>1</sup>.  
 Last Levee-morn he look'd it through,  
 During that awful hour or two  
 Of grave tonsorial preparation,  
 Which, to a fond, admiring nation,  
 Sends forth, announced by trump and drum,  
 The best-wigg'd P—e in Christendom.  
 He thinks with you, th' imagination  
 Of *partnership* in legislation  
 Could only enter in the noddles  
 Of dull and ledger-keeping twaddles,  
 Whose heads on *firms* are running so,  
 They e'en must have a King and Co.;  
 And hence, too, eloquently show forth  
 On *checks* and *balances* and so forth.

There is a touch of *Hudibras* here, although Moore is thin in comparison with Butler. It reminds us that in accounting for the collapse of the royal power after the Reform Bill we have always to remember the want of capacity and education which clung like a curse to the Hanoverians.

The Whigs were soon enabled to add another

<sup>1</sup> Revelations of Mrs Clarke, ex-mistress of the Tory Duke of York.

plank to their party-platform by the Treaties of Vienna in 1815. The arbitrary territorial arrangements made by the Four Great Powers which had conquered Napoleon were devised in complete disregard of the wishes of the populations concerned; and now the English Opposition came forward as champion of the rights of nationalities as well as of popular government. There is an amusing Tory skit on their objections to the annexation by England of the Danish island of Heligoland.

But scarcely less vile than the seizure of Poland  
Has been our base conduct to poor Heligoland;  
That innocent isle we have stolen from the Danes,  
And it groans with the weight of our trade and our chains.  
On that happy strand, not two lustres ago,  
The thistle was free in luxuriance to grow;  
The people at liberty starved and enjoy'd  
Their natural freedom, by riches uncloy'd.  
But now all this primitive virtue is fled;  
Rum, sugar, tobacco, are come in its stead;  
And, debauch'd by our profligate commerce, we see  
This much-injured race drinking porter and tea,  
And damning, half-fuddled, (I tell it with pain)  
Their true and legitimate master, the Dane.

We might be reading in these lines a satire at the close of the last century; Malta and Cyprus recur to the memory, not to mention other instances.

Each side now kept up an unremitting fire of squibs. These productions, some of which were published later in the *Whig* and *Tory Guides*, are mostly flat. Their main characteristic is their preference for a light and mocking style in place of direct denunciation. Herein Moore reigned supreme. It was in 1817 that he published his



best satire *The Fudge Family in Paris*, a new series of versified letters. Lord Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary, had succeeded the Prince Regent as *bête noire* for the Whigs. The Quadruple Alliance had soon declined from their professions of Liberalism, made in 1813. More and more they were actuated by the desire to maintain "whatever legally existed," and to resist any popular movement whether for Liberalism or Nationality. They further often construed "maintain" as meaning "restore"; and they used the dictatorship of Europe, which they had acquired from Napoleon, to exercise a general and oppressive surveillance over the minor states. This was coupled with a special anxiety to hold down the Revolutionary element in France, whence they always feared an explosion. Now England was a member of the Quadruple Alliance, and though Castlereagh by no means sympathised altogether with the later phase of that association consisting of its three eastern members, the Holy Alliance as it was called, he was fully at one with his partners in maintaining the *status quo*, and especially the Bourbons in France. The Whigs thoroughly disapproved of his policy as far as they knew it, and believed it to be more in accord with that of the three despotic Powers than it really was. Moore, therefore, makes Philip Fudge, one of his correspondents, a tool of Castlereagh, who visits Paris and reports to his chief. Castlereagh, it

should be mentioned, was a peculiarly bad speaker and provided unending jokes for his opponents, as may be seen in *Letter II*.

At length, my Lord, I have the bliss  
To date to you a line from this  
"Demoralized" metropolis;  
Where by plebeians low and scurvy  
The throne was turned quite topsy-turvy,  
And Kingship, tumbled from its seat,  
"Stood prostrate" at the people's feet;  
Where (still to use your Lordship's tropes)  
The *level* of obedience *slopes*  
Upward and downward, as the *stream*  
Of *hydra* faction *kicks the beam*.  
Where the poor palace changes masters  
Quicker than a snake its skin,  
And Louis is roll'd out on castors,  
While Boney's borne on shoulders in:  
But where, in every change, no doubt,  
One special good your Lordship traces,—  
That 'tis the *Kings* alone turn out,  
The *Ministers* still keep their places.

Castlereagh's own term of office had been of the longest. He was already Chief Secretary for Ireland during the suppression of the rebellion of 1798, a fact which Moore refers to subsequently.

But time and ink run short, and now,  
(As thou would'st say, my guide and teacher,  
In these gay metaphoric fringes)  
I must *embark* into the *feature*  
On which this letter chiefly *hinges*;  
My Book, the Book that is to prove—  
And *will*, (so help, ye Sprites above,  
That sit on clouds, as grave as judges,  
Watching the labours of the Fudges!)  
*Will* prove that all the world, at present,  
Is in a state extremely pleasant;  
That Europe, thanks to royal swords  
And bayonets and the Duke's commanding,  
Enjoys a peace which, like the Lord's,  
Passeth all human understanding;

That France prefers her go-cart King  
To such a coward scamp as Boney;  
Though round with each a leading-string  
There standeth many a Royal crony,  
For fear the chubby, tottering thing  
Should fall, if left there loney-poney;  
That England, too, the more her debts,  
The more she spends, the richer gets;  
And that the Irish, grateful nation!  
Remember when by thee reign'd over,  
And bless thee for the flagellation,  
As Heloisa did her lover.

These were Moore's palmy days, but he continued to write gaily for the Liberal side during many years. He was against the Corn-Laws as early as 1826: he produced endless verses in favour of Catholic Emancipation; he was for Parliamentary Reform and the redress of Irish grievances; he was a bitter enemy of the privileges and emoluments of the English clergy. But his humour gets thinner and thinner, though his verses always go lightly. In polish and finesse of wit he was outdone by his younger contemporary, Praed; in strength and poetic genius he was cast in the shade by Byron. (Still, besides the great merit of his earlier raillery, he must always retain the credit of the invention of the rapid, sparkling style of satire.) Unfortunately he missed the virtues of brevity and compression, and somehow in his comic as well as in his serious poetry he never seems to bring out the full charm of the language. The finest effects of English style are not his, though it would be hard to describe the mysterious bouquet which is absent from his vintage.

Although the Whigs were out of power, the stars in their courses were fighting for them. The Tories were outliving the credit they had gained in the war. They met the distress caused by the progress of the Industrial Revolution and the burdens of the war by mere repression, and steadily refused to see that times were changing or that novelty spelt anything but ruin. They were, however, scarcely to blame for one difficulty, the character of George IV, as the Prince Regent became in 1820. That worthless debauchee insisted on their undertaking a prosecution against his wife, which cost them much of their popularity. But the Queen was an ill patron-saint for the Whigs. Even Theodore Hook's vulgar pasquinades were effectual against her; and the enthusiasm for her died down completely when she took a pension and the official persecution ceased. The only result was to leave the King deprived of prestige and respect. The then Whig mockery of Praed expressed a really general opinion. The *King of the Sandwich Islands* passes his time—

building carriages and boats  
And streets and chapels and pavilions,  
And regulating all the coats  
And all the principles of millions,  
And drinking homilies and gin,  
And chewing pork and adulation,  
And looking backward upon sin,  
And looking forward to salvation.

The King, so enervate and contemptible, had little chance of resisting the increasing demand for

Catholic Emancipation. For a time, indeed, the power of his Tory Ministers, who were either against the measure or anxious to humour him, was buoyed up by a series of brilliant achievements in foreign affairs under Canning and of very respectable ones in finance under Huskisson. The debate was fervid throughout the country. When the contest grew to fever-heat about the time of Canning's death, the Whigs were decidedly better provided with political satirists. Not only had they Moore, but they also numbered among them the rising genius of Praed.

Well-connected, well-educated, typically well-bred, Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802-39), with his narrow but concentrated genius, was to mark an epoch in English Satire. This was due partly to his time: he lived at the beginning of recent history. But it was also due to his qualities. He was in a small way Horatian: he attained the Golden Mean in a manner of perfect finish. There was nothing eccentric, *outré* or even over-fashionable in this public-school boy; nothing to offend the changing taste of subsequent generations. Only the charm of his work has somewhat disappeared.

By his poems Praed may be regarded as finally dividing political satiric verse into two genres, the gaily, sardonic, lyrical style he cultivated being reserved for day to day politics, while greater issues are left for a more elevated poetry and a

more literary audience. The old rough and ready ballads had become extinct during the Great War; and Praed, like Moore and his fellows, took up their succession as well as that of the *Rolliad* and the lighter side of the *Anti-Jacobin*. In one way he differs from his forerunners. Indecency is not found in his verse, nor are those lampoons of private life which has not made itself public in the law-courts. In this cleanliness he represents the culmination of a development, though a very irregular one. [Coarseness and personalities had always been the bane of English satire from Cleveland's time on. Perhaps it is at its worst in the mid-reign of Charles II, and slowly improves afterwards. But there are relapses, and I think the most famous writers are usually a shade better than their contemporaries. A steadier improvement begins after the writers in the *Rolliad* campaign had disgraced themselves by their licence; and Praed may be said to inaugurate the unexceptionable era.]

Formal perfection seems to have been Praed's ideal, and with that he combined a mental alertness, which enabled him to compose in a style of anti-thetic wit a string of allusions to the opinions and oddities of his victims. Though not virulent in the old sense, he could be severe enough, as his *Retrospect* of Lord Chancellor Eldon may show :

When Pitt was Premier, well-a-day!  
I chanted Io Paeans,

And held the loftiest Whigs at bay,  
 As well as base plebeians.  
 I filled old Jacobins with awe,  
 Distorting fact and reason,  
 Whene'er 'twas wished to twist the law  
 Or find constructive treason.

I raved at all Republicans,  
 Detested snobbish hooters,  
 Got flattery from partisans,  
 And fees from Chancery suitors;  
 Reform I constantly decried,  
 Pronounced the truth a libel<sup>1</sup>,  
 On working days to briefs applied,  
 On Sundays read my Bible.

At length my loyalty was such,  
 It could but be rewarded;  
 And as I ne'er expected much,  
 A trifle was accorded.  
 Content the humble boon I took,  
 A coronet and pension,  
 And on the woolsack proudly shook  
 An Earldom's full dimension.

I kept the conscience of the king  
 With Protestant discernment;  
 And showed that freedom was a thing  
 Fit only for adjournment;  
 That granting rights to Catholics  
 Would be a dreadful omen,  
 And millions—say, some five or six—  
 Were positively no men.

In short there's nothing more required  
 Than bayonets and bullets,  
 At reasonable prices hired,  
 To stop these Irish gullets;  
 But God forbid that I should be  
 Like that vile Popish Bonner,  
 Who *roasted* folk for heresy,  
 And for the Church's honour!

I would not burn the wretches—faugh!  
 But hanging, drawing, quart'ring  
 Are quite agreeable to law  
 Which disapproves of tort'ring;  
 And really if they do persist  
 In actions contumacious,

<sup>1</sup> The greater the truth, the greater the libel—old legal maxim.

Why then increase the Army List,  
And shoot the most audacious!

But ah, the times are changed, and now,  
Repenting old oppressions,  
Majorities are bound to bow  
In favour of concessions;  
Yet I will still consistent be,  
Intolerant and Tory,  
And go down to posterity  
In pure and perfect glory.

It is characteristic of Praed that his satires require quoting at length, partly because their constructive art needs to be shown, partly because their wit is commonly somewhat diluted. It is the *tout ensemble* that strikes us. Gradually a caricature is evolved as one stanza of delicate humour follows another.

On Praed the enactment of Catholic Emancipation had a curious, but not unprecedented, effect. His reforming ardour began thenceforward to abate. The injustice which impressed him was abolished, and his natural instincts, which were aristocratic and fastidious, drew him rapidly over to the Tory side. When the Reform agitation grew great, he was its convinced opponent, and the Tories lost power and found their satirist almost at the same moment. His gift of urbane raillery peculiarly fitted him to ridicule popular enthusiasms. He treats them with a contemptuous composure which displays more than it hides the disgust within.

We're sick of this distressing state<sup>1</sup>  
Of order and repose;

<sup>1</sup> *The new Order of Things*, Dec. 1830.



We have not had enough of late  
Of blunders or of blows;  
We can't endure to pass our life  
In such a humdrum way;  
We want a little pleasant strife,—  
The Whigs are in to-day!

Our worthy fathers were content  
With all the world's applause;  
They thought they had a Parliament,  
And liberty and laws.  
It's no such thing; we've wept and groaned  
Beneath a despot's sway;  
We've all been whipped, and starved, and stoned—  
The Whigs are in to-day!

It's time for us to see the things  
Which other folk have seen;  
It's time we should cashier our kings,  
And build our guillotine;  
We'll abrogate Police and Peers,  
And vote the Church away;  
We'll hang the parish overseers—  
The Whigs are in to-day!

The repetition of the last line, or of a phrase of it, was a favourite trick of Praed's; but not often does he succeed in bringing it in with such variations of exultant folly as here. The year 1832 seemed indeed full of strange portents. It was a period of wild hopes. Corruption had received a staggering blow. A better world was coming. So, too, it was a period of wild fears. Sansculottism was rampant. Ignorance, rapacity and folly were to rule the roast. It was not the first time that Englishmen attributed to themselves an unpractical, hysterical temper that was not theirs. Scarcely was the Reformed Parliament met, than tradition resumed its sway; and the new House of Commons, led by the traditional circle of

Whig families, set itself in the ancient spirit of the race to sober and cautious reform. The effervescence of the less-trained classes in the country was calmly repressed, and the new Ministry showed itself quite aware how far it could go.

It was not to be expected that this chastened wisdom should appeal to the Tories. They drew sardonic parallels on the different attitudes of the Whigs to the mob before and after Reform : and Praed, for them, celebrated the change in some of his most witty and wrong-headed lines, *Thirty-two and Thirty-three*.

Of old, when long petitions came  
 From Tom and Dick, who brew and bake,  
 We used to hear the press proclaim  
 That all the nation was awake.  
 If Dick and Tom, who bake and brew,  
 To-day petition to be free,  
 "The nation" roared in Thirty-two,  
 It's just the mob in Thirty-three.  
 Our Pym and Hampdens made their bow  
 To millions, or to myriads, then;  
 But Lord! they only babble now  
 To half-a-score of drunken men.  
 Then nothing into numbers grew;  
 Now numbers into nothing flee;  
 For one was ten in Thirty-two,  
 And ten are one in Thirty-three.

Of course one must not underrate Praed's reasoning. The Chartist agitation was coming. Yet on the main point the Whigs were right. The excitement of Thirty-three was a pale reflex of that in Thirty-two.

Besides these general assaults Praed also made use of an Opposition's stock themes. Ministers

were of course incompetent and miserable mis-managers of affairs. Sometimes these strictures would be just, but an unjust survey of English foreign policy is perhaps the best. The Belgians had revolted in 1830 from their unsympathetic Dutch masters; and the intervention of the now Liberal Western Powers of England and France resulted in their independence, much to the detriment of the Treaties of Vienna and of the Holy Alliance. Praed chose to believe that England was hopelessly diddled by her partner all through the negotiations<sup>1</sup>.

It's true we've not been doing *much*  
To make the Frenchman humble;  
And after all those dear, dull Dutch  
Have cause enough to grumble.  
We cannot see—who says we can?—  
Through Talleyrand's inventions;  
For he's a wicked, clever man;  
And we—have pure intentions.

The spirit of ridicule could no farther go. But Praed had also severer moments, not, it may be, so happy. In the following he uses the old, partly sincere cant of “degenerate days” compared with the grand times of a generation since. Palmerston on one occasion (1834) followed his usual practice of not resigning on some change of policy. Taunts were vain.

The scornful look, the angry tone,  
Are vain in these degenerate days;  
Resigned? Oh no, high hearts alone  
Can rightly value blame and praise.

<sup>1</sup> *Intentions, a remonstrance in the Ventilator (Ladies' Gallery).*

A nation's sneer, a nation's frown,  
 Might awe, might fire, a noble mind;  
 Pitt would have flung his office down!  
 Lord Palmerston has not resigned.

This pigmy was soon to become the Grand Old Man of 1860, dwarfing his degenerate successors. But Praed died long before, even before the Conservatives returned to power under Peel. In his short career he had laid down the laws for future satirists of the gay and witty sort. No longer the bludgeon was to be employed for passing ridicule, but neat rapier-thrusts. So the cumbrous tales of our forefathers gave way to the credible events of Thackerayan novels.

It is a disappointment not to find a worthy successor to Praed, though he had imitators in abundance. It makes one cast about for a special reason, when perhaps the general vicissitudes of literature are sufficient to account for the fact. Praed, it may be said, died youngest of the great "early Victorian" writers. Thus he left an observable gap in their ranks. Then the very excellence and refinement of his style made him difficult to follow, as also happened to Tennyson later. Yet one imitator, FitzGerald, wrote with much skill in his vein. After all, perhaps the main reasons were two. Satire in elevated poetry tended to devote itself to subjects of European and foreign interest which had little local application in England. The Revolutionary year 1848 saw no revolution here. Secondly, the foundation and

extraordinary success of *Punch* directed satiric ability more and more for the time at least towards gibes at society and the doings of the ordinary man. It was *Punch's* cartoons which dealt with politics. On the latter Calverley does not appear to have touched. Of Thackeray, so fit for the métier, there are, to be sure, the whimsical verses on the three *Christmas Waits* of 1848, Louis Philippe, King Coffee of Ashanti and Smith O'Brien, who led a burlesque revolt in the West of Ireland. The Saxon troops resisted the latter's attack, and he surrendered in a kitchen-garden.

“Our people they defied,  
They shot at 'em like savages,  
Their bloody guns they plied  
With sanguinary ravages;  
Hide, blushing glory, hide  
That day among the cabbages.”

Disraeli attempted to revive a vigorous party-satire in his attack on the Coalition of Liberals and Peelites in 1854; but the effort was not a successful one. Squibs enough appeared in a special newspaper, the *Press*, and were afterwards republished in the *Coalition Guide*. None of them, however, reached a high standard of wit or humour. The spirits would not come when he did call for them.

One genre of satiric verse, which appeared from time to time among the political squibs of *Punch*, was a very old one in its essence. This was the parody. In elder times a chief requisite

for a successful political ballad had been a good and familiar tune. Hence from the Civil War onwards there appeared swarms of songs in the form of a Litany or with such a refrain as "Which nobody can deny." These compositions died out gradually with the vogue of the old airs; while the parody proper of a political adversary's composition is to be found coming into use in the *Probationary Odes*. Now, however, *Punch* would take a popular song and turn it into a squib much in the earlier way. Such a light kind of parody, of course, could not stand by itself. But it was admirably suited for its purpose of emphasizing the moral of the immortal cartoons it accompanied.

Other work of a more brilliant nature appeared from time to time. Perhaps Sir George Trevelyan enjoys a celebrity from his youthful squibs more enduring than that he acquired on the dusty ways of practical politics. The *Ladies in Parliament*, which he wrote in 1866, contains some verses which deserve to live *plus uno perenne saeclo*. Russell's and Gladstone's Reform Bill of that year had just been abandoned owing to the revolt of those dissentient Liberal members known as the Cave of Adullam. The references which the Liberal satirist makes to them and the Conservatives are not very striking; but he describes the good old times with a mixture of irony and admiring humour which has not yet lost its savour.

[ Aristophanes found a worthy imitator.

We much revere our sires, who were a mighty race of men.  
For every glass of port we drink, they nothing thought of  
ten.

They dwelt above the foulest drains. They breathed the  
closest air.

They had their yearly twinge of gout, and little seemed to  
care.

They set those meddling people down for Jacobins or fools,  
Who talked of public libraries and grants to normal schools;  
Since common folks who read, and write, and like their  
betters speak,

Want something more than pipes and beer, and sermons  
once a week.

And therefore both by land and sea their match they rarely  
met,

But made the name of Britain great, and ran her deep in  
debt.

They seldom stopped to count the foe, or sum the moneys  
spent,

But clenched their teeth and straight ahead with sword  
and musket went.

And though they thought, if trade were free that England  
ne'er would thrive,

They freely gave their blood for Moore and Wellington and  
Clive.

And though they burned their coal at home, nor fetched  
their ice from Wenham,

They played the man before Quebec, and stormed the lines  
at Blenheim.

When sailors lived on mouldy bread, and lumps of musty  
pork,

No Frenchman dared his nose to show between the Downs  
and Cork;

But now that Jack gets beef and greens, and next his skin  
wears flannel,

The "Standard" says we've not a ship in plight to keep  
the Channel.

And while they held their own in war, our fathers showed  
no stint

Of fire and nerve and vigour rough, whene'er they took to  
print.

They charged at hazard through the crowd, and recked  
not whom they hurt,

And taught their Pegasus to kick and splash about the  
dirt;

And every jolly Whig who drank at Brooks's joined to goad  
That poor young Heaven-born minister with epigram and  
ode,

Because he would not call a main, nor shake the midnight  
                   box,  
 Nor flirt with all the pretty girls like gallant Charley Fox.  
 But now the press has squeamish grown, and thinks in-  
                   vective rash;  
 And telling hits no longer lurk 'neath asterisk and dash;  
 And poets deal in epithets as soft as skeins of silk,  
 Nor dream of calling silly lords a curd of ass's milk.  
 And satirists confine their art to cutting jokes on Beales,  
 Or snap like angry puppies round a mightier tribune's  
                   heels:  
 Discussing whether he can scan and understand the lines  
 About the wooden Horse of Troy, and when and where he  
                   dines:  
 Though gentlemen should blush to talk as if they cared  
                   a button  
 Because one night in Chesham Place he ate his slice of  
                   mutton<sup>1</sup>.

Trevelyan's method of accounting for the poverty  
 of party-satire in his day has some truth in it no  
 doubt. A laugh was harder to raise under the new  
 conditions of restraint in subject and manner; but  
 this penalty applied to mediocrity only. Lines,  
 like Trevelyan's own on

those patrons of their race

Who like the honest working-man, but like him in his  
                   place,

rise superior to the restrictions of modern manners,  
 and after all the best of what he admired in the  
 past will generally conform to later notions of  
 propriety.

Still as a whole the satiric verses of the middle  
 Victorian period are not inspiring. A whimsical  
 jubilation by F. D. over the resignation of Gladstone

<sup>1</sup> In the London season of 1866 there was much gossip over  
 the fact of Lord John Russell having entertained Mr Bright at  
 dinner. *Trevelyan's note.*



in 1874 has some merit, but of a rather exiguous kind. It describes the last Cabinet Council.

Poor G. midst the weeping and wailing,  
 Attempted their feelings to calm,  
 And promote a return to plain sailing,  
 By leading the tone to a psalm.  
 But the words in his throttle they stuck—stuck,  
 And besides he'd forgotten the tune,  
 Put out, as it were, by the Buck—Buck—  
 Buckinghamshire Buffoon.

It is not easy to say whether the greater interest of more recent satire is due to its intrinsic merit or to the still warm political sympathies to which it appeals. *A me par oro*, but a secure judgment is impossible, when one's prepossessions are so likely to be engaged, and while the atmosphere of the time continues to be so sympathetic to the squibs themselves. We know too well the feelings they express to be impartial.

One lively writer on the Conservative side employs an airy, unmalicious fun which is very attractive. No Radical, one would think, would be much annoyed at such a description of the Newcastle Programme as the following:

Each evil to its ghastly root  
 I trace with all unclouded ken,  
 See women hungering to be men,  
 And ploughboys for a village-moot;  
 And naught my energies shall daunt,—  
 Ratepaying matters not to me,—  
 Till everything they do not want  
 Is furnished to the masses—*free*.

The true successor to Praed, however, is to be found in Mr Owen Seaman. In both there is the same zeal for form, and a kindred delicacy of wit.

Mr Seaman is in some ways more varied than his forerunner. He uses many metres. He makes excursions into parody for his political ends. More, too, than Praed he cultivates a conversational negligence of phrase. But in essentials the resemblance is close. Politics are introduced by them as one among other aspects of social life. Of this a good example is Mr Seaman's *Entre Noel et le Jour de l'An*. The events of 1894 are fresh in everyone's recollection. Among them was that unfortunate phrase of Lord Rosebery's about the need of converting "the predominant partner," England, to Irish Home Rule, before the latter could become possible, words which had to be interpreted afterwards under pressure from his Irish supporters.

Entre Noel et le Jour de l'An  
 The oracles are mostly dumb;  
 Still is the hustings rataplan,  
 And still the stumper's hideous hum;  
 The time invites to eat and drink,  
 And in the intervals to think.

The statesman's studied repartee  
 Is lightly laid upon the shelf;  
 Even the Earl of Rosebery  
 Refuses to commit himself;  
 And, having nothing new to say,  
 Has nothing to explain away.

It is noticeable that a classical flavour in verse has a pensive effect in these days: eighty years ago it was a cheerful influence. Perhaps the change is due to the progress of democratic feeling now; the big drum drowns both the antique flute

and the zither of the Middle Ages, and the snatches we hear of the two latter are naturally plaintive.

A sense of comedy prevails in Mr Seaman's skit on the resignation of the Liberal Leadership by Sir William Harcourt, when that veteran statesman was wearied of the disunion of his followers. Of the two parodies of which it consists, perhaps that of Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur* is the better. It is the more humorous, although in it as in its fellow the humour has a tone of much acerbity. The imitation Arthur departs in a balloon, attended by Lord Morley (John l'Honnête) and Sir Henry Fowler (Sir Cop-la-poule). His farewell is hesitating :

"Yet let thy voice  
Roll like an organ for me in the Press,  
That men may know the worth of what they lose.  
And now farewell! I am addressed to go  
A strange excursion—if indeed I go,  
For I myself have had my doubts of this—  
To some far-off aerial Lotus-isle,  
A land where it is evermore P.M.;  
Where falls not any noise of party-strife,  
Nor horrid hum of rival leaderships,  
But all is inward calm, with ample space  
For writing reams of letters to the *Times*."

. . . . .  
So I to bed;  
And dreaming far into the Christmas dawn,  
Beheld a parachute, and therewithal  
Pendent a personage of stateliest port,  
That earthward shot; and all the people cried,  
"Harcourt is come again! We knew he would!"  
And Cymric voices echoed: "Come again!  
He never meant to die!"

The allusions all through refer to things too recent to need a commentary. The prophecy, of course,

if it was really seriously intended, was never fulfilled.

Not always, however, is Mr Seaman so purely conservative in sympathy as in *Resignation*. Often he expresses an opinion generally held by members of both parties. An admirable instance in point is furnished by his verses on the last stage of the celebrated Fashoda incident. Recent international cordialities have tended to make us forget the simmering vexation felt in England over that curious adventure of speculative diplomacy. *The Hurt that Honour feels* is a scornful answer to the arguments and not very reasonable complaints of the French press.

That man is surely in the wrong  
 And lets his angry passions blind him,  
 Who, when a person comes along  
     Behind him,  
 And hits him hard upon the cheek  
 (One whom he took to be his brother),  
 Declines to turn and let him tweak  
     The other.

It should be his immediate care  
 By delicate and tactful dealings  
 To ease the striker's pain and spare  
     His feelings;  
 Nor should he, for his private ends,  
 Make any personal allusion  
 Tending to aggravate his friend's  
     Confusion.

For there are people built this way:  
 They may have scratched your face or bent it,  
 Yet, if you reason with them, they  
     Resent it!  
 Their honour, quickly rendered sore,  
 Demands that you should suffer mutely,

Lest they should feel it even more  
Acutely.

. . . . .  
Thus England should not take offence  
When, from behind, they jump upon her;  
She must not hurt their lively sense  
Of honour.  
For plain opinions, put in speech,  
Might lead to blows, which might be bloody,  
A lesson which the Press should teach  
And study!

This mordant satire has a grave air enough, and no one would question its justice to the north of the Channel, but possibly it is surpassed by a simpler piece of Mr Seaman's dealing with delinquencies nearer home. It is too thorny a subject to express an opinion on here ; yet perhaps the jester has a claim to serious hearing, when he criticizes the attitude of English parties in their attempts to remould primary education. In *Shylock and the Pound of Soul* he addresses the person most concerned, the English Child.

It lies, I trust, outside your ken  
That nightly, till the senses reel,  
Six hundred heated Christian men  
Wrestle for your immortal weal.  
Yes, when on Heaven's name they call  
And knock each other's doctrines flat,  
You are their object; it is all  
On *your* account, unconscious brat!  
Summer will pass, and Winter's hand  
Of dying Autumn take his toll,  
And still, like Shylocks, they will stand,  
Claiming their punctual pound of soul.  
I wonder, should you come to know  
The facts about this deadly feud,  
Whether your little heart would go  
And burst with speechless gratitude;

Or rather, being made aware  
What means they used to gain their ends,  
You would compose a tiny prayer  
To be delivered from your friends;  
And crave permission of the star  
That on your recent advent smiled,  
Just to continue what you are—  
A simple, bounding, heathen child.

[The fact is that a purely mirthful spirit barely exists in English literature. A serious application will appear among the wit, even in so specialized a light verse as that initiated by Praed.

## CHAPTER VII

### ELEVATED SATIRE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

While lighter political verse continued its development as we have seen, the more elevated forms of poetry were by no means neglected for political themes. But their subjects were very different in the main from what they had been in the past age. The greater part of the nineteenth century was marked in Europe by the progress of three allied political ideas, which all looked back to the period of the French Revolution as the beginning of their greatness. They were political Liberty, roughly so styled, Nationality and Internationalism. In general, the two former were resisted by the partisans of Restoration, who obtained the mastery of Europe after the fall of Napoleon, but the tenet of Internationalism was as strongly held by them as by the favourers of change, and in fact its application was one of their chief weapons in waging war on the Revolutionary Spirit. Connected with the greater feeling of solidarity, both national and European, was the impulse to social reform, which

derived both from the conscientious policy of the philosophic despots of the age ~~before and from the~~ levelling humanitarianism of the French Revolution. With the Liberals it took the form of a movement towards democracy and the abolition of privilege, with the Reactionaries that of material improvements and of an anxious surveillance of religion and of European peace. One side saw that Europe was still bleeding from the subversive wars of the Revolution, the other that the popular gains had been small and had been diminished by the circumstances of the subsequent peace. Although England was not exactly in line with the despotic powers of the Continent, the influence of the Reactionary conditions under which the peace of Europe had been attained was strongly marked on her government. The Tories in power largely sympathized with their absolutist allies: their own methods retained in peace too much of the arbitrary character adopted during the war: they were nervously anxious at any sign of change or of increased independence among the non-privileged classes: they were determined to maintain intact the mingled oligarchy and monarchy as they stood. Thus international conditions aided the new international sympathy to make a purely local satire or literature impossible. The kinship of national ideas, which had so long been growing up in Europe, had increased too much to allow that to be the case.

It was to international action that the dominant



Conservatives, led by Metternich and Alexander I, looked to enforce their ideas. The latter, as well as the policy pursued, embraced discordant elements. There was the fanciful document of the Holy Alliance, which soon gave a useful name to the closer union of the three despotic powers, Russia, Austria and Prussia. It expressed fairly well in a whimsical, hyperbolic way the notions of religion and Divine Right which formed part of the absolutist creed. There was the sentimental Liberalism, personal to Tzar Alexander, which first excited the hopes of the Liberals, and then, as it faded away under a mixture of common-sense, despotic feeling and a desire for peace, created among them a bitter sense of betrayal. Finally, there was the control of Europe exercised by the four victorious Powers as a part of the spoils wrested from Napoleon. It was at the same time conservative in its efforts to maintain the *status quo*, and disruptive owing to the unlikeness and the diverse interests of its members, England being specially divergent from the rest.

In this state of affairs the policy of the Liberals, if a trend of opinion can be called a policy, was almost prescribed for them. In England they were bound to support the old Whig doctrine as to the monarchy and to oppose the government's measures of repression. As to foreign affairs, the treaties of Vienna and the "Holy Alliance" were the objects of their bitter hatred ; for the first contained the

negation of national aspirations, and in the second lay the guarantee of the organized system of despotism and stagnation throughout Europe.

Simultaneously with this international phase of politics came an analogous phenomenon in literature. Great champions of either cause arose, of European influence as well as reputation: and both sides together combine to form the Romantic school of literature, if one may venture to group the various movements in different countries in so definite a relationship to one another. The Conservative protagonists in the years following 1815 were Chateaubriand and Scott. Equal to them in influence, but on the Liberal side, was Byron (1788—1824).

✓ The greater part of Byron's work served the cause of Liberalism more by its tendencies than by any direct support. He represented the destructive forces which were breaking up the older fabric of society. He abandons the discreet, aristocratic reserve of men under the Ancien Régime, and is undisguisedly egotistic. Their hackneyed phrases are partly rejuvenated in a rich, coloured verse. Their narrowness, which reduced all characters and times to an unreal pattern of contemporary manners, gives way to dramatic sympathies showing themselves in vivid local colour and in a sense of the perspective of history. A crowd of wild composite passions succeed the abstract phantoms which had suited the stiff

decorum just passing away. He shows a reversion to the bold imagination of the Elizabethans, to whom the new classes, then rising into prominence, had perhaps more kinship than had the generations of Pope and Johnson. And the memory of the Napoleonic times, so full of dramatic events and tragic change, made men desire still more some imaginative relief from the drab days of the Restoration.

Byron, then, supplied the needs of his contemporaries, and he supplied them with a triumphant energy which has retained him among the immortals. It was a moral energy, too, one of revolt against cant and defiance of obsolete formulas, now grown a clog. But in whatever aspect, it is energy which combines and inspires the great qualities of his verse.

Part of his originality lay in his choice of models. It is a curious fact that the decadence of English poetry during the eighteenth century was accompanied by a narrow devotion to the classic French masterpieces. No doubt this was largely due to mere coincidence. French poetry itself was decadent at the same time. The conditions of society which govern taste had some resemblance in both countries. But still there was perhaps some deep-rooted diversity of temperament which made a predominant French influence in English literature bring serious disadvantages with it. The abundance of the natural English style was stunted

in the classic school, sparing of detail and effect as the latter was. Its varied harmony was destroyed in the attempt to produce the equable flow of French verse. And the French insistence on rules and principles damped an irregular, but glowing inspiration. Pedantry in verse-making is perhaps the deadliest foe to poetry. Now Byron, like Milton and many of the Elizabethans, was a student of Italian literature, and, so far as he was affected by foreign models, they were chiefly Italian. Thus the revolt from an uncongenial authority was followed by the admission of a subtle persuasive influence. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the results of his phil-Italic leanings were mainly good. The masterpieces of Italian literature, though redolent of the soil from which they sprang, were less apart from the unbiassed English taste than were those of France. They belonged mostly to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, before the literary ideals of the European nations had become either so divergent or so Frenchified as later was the case. Their conventions were so obsolete or local as not to be a possible false guide to an admirer of them: and while their essentially classical spirit was familiar to and easily appreciated by Englishmen owing to their education, it had not come under a rigid code of ceremonial court-rules like that of France. As a consequence, I think, its influence can be seen in Byron and Shelley as a restraining mould for the northern

Romantic fancy with its wild world of mist and woodland.

Byron, besides, owed Italy a particular debt in his specifically satiric manner. No other literature had so marvellously combined the grave and gay. Often in Ariosto's light irony we hardly know on which aspect the poet insists most. He diverts himself as there is nothing else left to do. A spirit of mockery pervaded the air of Italy in the Renaissance. Foreigners, despots and ecclesiastics could not be done away with, but they could be scoffed at with so delicate a raillery that they could barely resent it: and the courtly poets of the age vied with one another in the evasive bitterness of their allusions. It was this Italian style, so light, so gay, so worldly-wise and so poetical with it all, that Byron employed to reinvigorate English satire. The witty simplicity of Pulci and Ariosto took the place of Churchill's tirades. But Byron added a strength and courage of his own, herein unlike the Italians: and his spirit is profoundly tragic. Pity and fear mingle with our admiration of his wit and of the scorn of his invective. There comes a terrible clangour from the silver bow.

His first great political satire had its origin partly in accident. The death of George III after years of insanity was celebrated as in duty bound by Southey, now a strong Tory and Poet Laureate. That excellent man could not avoid his "odeous" task; but in its irksome performance he certainly

laid himself open to criticism. Undeterred by the fate of his Sapphics and Dactyls at Canning's hands, he chose Hexameters for his metre. And the plan of his *Vision of Judgment* was marred both by bigotry and by want of humour. The soul of George III is borne to heaven for admission. The Fiend "many-headed and monstrous" (? Democracy) enters a claim for his possession and backs it by the evidence of Wilkes and Junius of letter-writing fame. But they are both bad witnesses, the former, cause of the American revolt, says Southey, having become gloomy as well since his residence in the Infernal Regions. The King is received among the Blest, and is welcomed by the murdered Prime Minister Perceval, for Southey could never forgive the greater Pitt his anti-French policy of 1792 ; and the poem ends with scenes of heavenly triumph.

This was a dangerous work to publish while any satirist lived. But Southey further stirred up enmity by the passage on the Satanic school in his preface. In words as weighty as fine prose and zeal for the purity of literature could make them he denounced the libertinism and irreligion of the new Romantics, of whom Byron and Shelley were the chief. To us the force of the attack may be somewhat lessened by Southey's conviction that all deviations, theoretic or otherwise, from the accepted code of which he was become an adherent implied a fathomless moral

turpitude. Yet one can hardly doubt that in the main he was right. The author of *Don Juan* had not only borrowed Italian virtues. The licence and almost gruesome cynicism of Italian literature were to be found there expressed with audacious courage; and whatever pleas may be justly raised against prudishness in letters, there surely its opposite was overdone.

Southey had had a personal grievance against the chief of the Satanic school. In the mock dedication of *Don Juan*, published separately in 1818 with a pretence of anonymity, Byron had made a brutal attack on him and the Tory minister Castlereagh. The vulgar spite of these verses is so pronounced as to destroy much of the effect of their wit; yet one nobler stanza will show their keenness.

Where shall I turn me not to view its<sup>1</sup> bonds,  
For I will never feel them?—Italy!  
Thy late reviving Roman soul desponds  
Beneath the lie this State-thing breathed o'er thee -  
Thy clanking chain, and Erin's yet green wounds,  
Have voices—tongues to cry aloud for me.  
Europe has slaves—allies—kings—armies still—  
And Southey lives to sing them very ill.

Here we have nearly all the grievances of the European Liberals heaped together. Italy, of course, parcelled out anew among her despots, in reality an Austrian province, was a chief sufferer from the Viennese Congress, while a national spirit and the hope for better things had revived

<sup>1</sup> Byron uses this taunt against Castlereagh.

under Napoleon and made the present more bitter. One can only wish the attack on Southey had been limited to the last line.

However, Southey struck a heavy counterblow, and now in 1821 Byron prepared his retort. It, likewise named *The Vision of Judgment*, was a parody of Southey's poem written in the *ottava rima* of which Byron was a master. In these splendid stanzas all the weapons of satire are employed one after another, jibing, irony, humour, invective and contempt; and they alternate with passages of a tempestuous imagination. Throughout they are never prosaic, pompous or halting, and it would be difficult to find a satire which keeps so sustained and high a level of pure poetry. Byron himself is an attractive figure in it with all his faults of vulgar fury and cynicism. After the pettifogging satirists of the last century and their mean skirmishes, he comes to the lists like Tristram in *The Last Tournament*, and lesser men shrink to the bounds before him.

Byron follows pretty faithfully the plan of Southey's hexameters. His opening scene at the gates of Heaven burlesques that of his foe, and is even fuller of moral judgments.

St Peter sat by the celestial gate:

His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull,  
So little trouble had been given of late:

Not that the place by any means was full,  
But since the Gallic era "eighty-eight"

The Devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,  
And "a pull altogether," as they say  
At sea—which drew most souls another way.



The Angels all were singing out of tune,  
And hoarse with having little else to do,  
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,  
Or curb a runaway young star or two,  
Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon  
Broke out of bounds o'er the ethereal blue,  
Splitting some planet with its playful tail,  
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.

The Guardian Seraphs had retired on high,  
Finding their charges past all care below;  
Terrestrial business filled nought in the sky  
Save the Recording Angel's black bureau;  
Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply  
With such rapidity of vice and woe,  
That he had stripp'd off both his wings in quills,  
And yet was in arrear of human ills.

His business so augmented of late years,  
That he was forced, against his will, no doubt,  
(Just like those cherubs, earthly ministers),  
For some resource to turn himself about,  
And claim the help of his celestial peers,  
To aid him ere he should be quite worn out  
By the increased demand for his remarks:  
Six Angels and twelve Saints were named his clerks.

This was a handsome board—at least for Heaven;  
And yet they had even then enough to do,  
So many Conquerors' cars were daily driven,  
So many kingdoms fitted up anew;  
Each day, too, slew its thousands six or seven,  
Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,  
They threw their pens down in divine disgust—  
The page was so besmear'd with blood and dust.

The rushing energy of Byron's verse is no less ready to deal with the sublime. As in Southey's poem George III is conveyed towards Heaven by a band of Angels, and Satan appears to make his claim.

But bringing up the rear of this bright host  
A spirit of a different aspect waved  
His wings, like thunder-clouds above some coast  
Whose barren beach with frequent wrecks is paved;

His brow was like the deep when tempest-toss'd;  
Fierce and unfathomable thoughts engraved  
Eternal wrath on his immortal face,  
And *where* he gazed a gloom pervaded space.

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It is noticeable that the usual argument advanced against the employment of the *ottava rima* in serious poetry, that the final couplet has too epigrammatic an effect, does not seem to apply even to Byron's satiric verse. The last couplet is never isolated unless it is so designedly for effect. At the same time the stanza's slipping, rapid movement must be admitted to require "moving accident" for its theme. It cannot pause or reflect for long; and I imagine this is one reason for the crowding of notions, details and illustrations in Byron's use of it. The verse needs some substitute for action when it stays to think. But no doubt the avoidance of real meditation was congenial to Byron's genius. "The moment he reflects, he is a child," Goethe said.

To resume the story, the Archangel Michael comes forward to defend the King from Satan, and the latter is invited to state his case. Two or three stanzas of it must be quoted, for Satan is in politics a sublimer Whig.

When this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor worm  
Began in youth's first bloom and flush to reign,  
The world and he both wore a different form,  
And much of earth and all the watery plain  
Of Ocean call'd him king: through many a storm  
His isles had floated on the abyss of Time;  
For the rough virtues chose them for their clime.

He came to his sceptre young; he leaves it old:

Look to the state in which he found his realm,  
And left it; and his annals too behold,

How to a minion first he gave the helm;  
How grew upon his heart a thirst for gold,

The beggar's vice, which can but overwhelm  
The meanest hearts; and for the rest, but glance  
Thine eye along America and France.

'Tis true he was a tool from first to last

(I have the workmen safe); but as a tool  
So let him be consumed. From out the past

Of ages, since mankind have known the rule  
Of monarchs—from the bloody rolls amass'd

Of Sin and Slaughter—from the Caesars' school,  
Take the worst pupil; and produce a reign  
More drench'd with gore, more cumber'd with the slain.

He ever warr'd with freedom and the free:

Nations as men, home subjects, foreign foes,  
So that they utter'd the word "Liberty!"

Found George the Third their first opponent. Whose  
History was ever stain'd as his will be

With national and individual woes?

Did Byron know he was misreading history in this ingenious selection of events from George's reign, or did he give it in good faith? Either way the merit of the verse is the same, and its effect too: Byron stands among those creative forces which have shaped the world as it is.

He had not, however, yet done with Southey. Wilkes and Junius are again called as witnesses, a very different pair from Southey's ghosts. Both phantoms are extraordinarily alive. Wilkes extends a contemptuous forgiveness to his royal foe; Junius reiterates the truth of his charges. The Archangel asks if there was not exaggeration.

"Thou wast  
Too bitter—is it not so?—in thy gloom  
Of passion?"—"Passion!" cried the phantom dim,  
"I loved my country, and I hated him."

But now the demon Asmodeus creates a diversion by haling up Southey himself, on a charge of contempt by anticipating the verdict of the court in his *Vision*. To the horror of the assembly the Laureate prepares to read his poem.

A general bustle spread throughout the throng,  
Which seem'd to hold all verse in detestation;  
The Angels had of course enough of song  
When upon service; and the generation  
Of ghosts had heard too much in life, not long  
Before, to profit by a new occasion:  
The Monarch, mute till then, exclaim'd, "What! what!—  
*Pye* come again? No more—no more of that!"

The tumult grew; an universal cough  
Convulsed the skies, as during a debate,  
When Castlereagh has been up long enough  
(Before he was first minister of state,  
I mean—the *slaves hear now*); some cried 'Off, off!'  
As at a farce; till, grown quite desperate,  
The Bard St Peter pray'd to interpose.  
(Himself an author) only for his prose.

Southey is at length allowed to plead; he is, he says, an author by profession on all subjects.

He had written praises of a Regicide;  
He had written praises of all Kings whatever;  
He had written for republics far and wide,  
And then against them bitterer than ever;  
For pantisocracy he once had cried  
Aloud, a scheme less moral than 'twas clever;  
Then grew a hearty anti-jacobin—  
Had turn'd his coat—and would have turn'd his skin.

Byron's railing was bitter and unfair, but telling to say the least; and the last words he puts in Southey's mouth had some truth at bottom.

"Now you shall judge, all people—yes—you shall  
Judge with my judgment! and by my decision  
Be guided who shall enter heaven or fall.

I settle all these things by intuition,  
Times present, past, to come—Heaven—Hell—and all,  
Like King Alfonso. When I thus see double,  
I save the Deity some worlds of trouble."

Southey's fault was indeed this calm conviction of rectitude. "Now, said my heavenly Teacher, all is clear," is a characteristic line of his, with which perhaps we have less sympathy than his contemporaries showed. With Byron himself a haunting doubt seems ever present, but none the less he rides forward to test the event.

When at last we reach the discomfiture of the Laureate at the hands of St Peter and *The Vision of Judgment* closes, we feel, I think, that, in spite of his personal virulence towards the now reverend figure of Southey, Byron was fighting for a cause and for principles. Liberalism in politics and thought gives the key-note of the poem. He opposes the narrow, self-righteous dogmatism of the old school, which had been hardened almost into obscurantism by its successful resistance to the Jacobins and by the latter's disregard of history, experience and common-sense. Now Byron was able to improve on those predecessors of his, insomuch as he possessed the historical sense in a high degree. It was only by that quality that theoretic Liberalism could find feet to go upon in the actual world. A moral sense, Byron, whose own was not greatly active, could not aid in developing in others, and a moral standard he barely possessed. For both those necessities the

movement was indebted to purer heroes of its own or of its opponents.

It is tempting to dwell on *The Vision of Judgment* owing to its superiority to all English satires succeeding those of Pope. For a poetical equal we have to go to Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. It is not easy, however, to compare the two. In humanity, in good-breeding and in convincing power Dryden is, I think, far superior. Shaftesbury's character has never quite recovered from his aspersions. He remains to us the turbulent demagogue who could not have legalized revolution like the men of 1689. If this is an unjust view, Dryden has the credit of warping history ; if true, he had an admirable insight into the course of politics. But in poetry and imagination, in variety of powers and in force of ideas, Byron much surpasses him. If only he could have compassionated the senseless clay !

Byron's second long political poem was *The Age of Bronze*, written in 1822-3, just after the Congress of Verona. An outburst of Liberalism had occurred in 1820. First, the Spanish Liberals had forced an extreme democratic constitution on the restored Bourbon, Ferdinand VII, who had wearied his subjects by persistent misgovernment. Then the Neapolitans had followed suit. Elsewhere revolutionary unrest was prevalent among the middle classes ; while in Greece a revolt broke out against the Turks, mostly caused by religious

antipathy and their state of servitude, but also coloured by Western Liberal notions, which, together with the principle of nationality and classic enthusiasm, made it much in favour with Liberals everywhere. The Great Powers were somewhat divided in sympathy but their action at first was unanimous. They agreed at the Congresses of Troppau and Laybach to consider the Greeks as rebels against their legitimate sovereign, and the Neapolitans as pernicious revolutionaries within Austria's sphere of action. Spain was considered too distant to be dangerous or to be easily corrected. Accordingly in 1821 Naples was conquered and a further Piedmontese revolution put down by Austria, while Sultan and Greek were left to their own devices, that is to an exterminating war. These circumstances have to be remembered when we judge Byron's violence against the English Minister who supported repressive measures. Castlereagh, although he was much less inclined to common action than the "Holy Alliance" were, had little objection to piecemeal coercion by Austria or by any other power concerned so long as the balance of power was not upset. The prospects of the Liberals meantime grew worse. Alexander became more despotic in temper. In Germany the universities and press were put under surveillance, and all political activity was checked. Spain seemed their last hope, but the Spanish Liberals were not equal to the occasion. An inexperienced minority

at best, they had the Church and peasantry against them ; and very soon Spain was in a condition of anarchy.

It was chiefly to consider the Spanish question that the Congress of Verona met : and the result of its deliberations was that France should intervene to restore despotism in Spain with the moral support of the "Holy Alliance." But not with that of England. Canning, just come to power, objected, like Castlereagh, to the establishment of a Directory for Europe. He feared for English interests, if France became predominant in Spain. Then he was too English and too great a Parliamentary to sympathize with despotism. In result, he broke openly with the "Holy Alliance" and with the principle of maintaining the sovrans of 1815 in their possessions ; and by recognizing the revolted American colonies of Spain as independent, he deprived France of her greatest chance of gain and limited the supremacy of the "Holy Alliance" to Europe.

Thus in Dec. 1822 the issue was clear, and it was an obvious move on the part of the Liberals to write down the "Holy Alliance" and the system of Congress-government of Europe ; and Byron attempted the task in *The Age of Bronze*. The poem cannot compete with *The Vision of Judgment* for fire and genius. Nevertheless it has great merits. It is over-rhetorical in the school of Churchill ; yet the rhetoric has life in it. He begins by a lengthy retrospect of the great days of



Napoleon, and then celebrates the Liberal Movement which is to regenerate Europe. Then he turns to the Allies.

But lo! a Congress! What! that hallow'd name  
Which freed the Atlantic! May we hope the same  
For outworn Europe?

Who now assemble at the holy call?  
The blest Alliance, which says three are all!  
An earthly Trinity! which wears the shape  
Of Heaven's, as man is mimick'd by the ape.  
A pious Unity! in purpose one—  
To melt three fools to a Napoleon.

So he continues to describe the members of the European Alliance one by one; the

coxcomb Czar...

With no objection to true Liberty,  
Except that it would make the nations free;

then "good classic Louis" on his uneasy throne;  
and lastly England. Canning extorts his praise,  
though he sees well enough what an insecure hold  
the Minister had on his party. But for that party  
and indeed for the Whigs too he reserves only a  
bitter contempt.

See these inglorious Cincinnati swarm,  
Farmers of war, dictators of the farm;  
*Their* ploughshare was the sword in hireling hands,  
*Their* fields manured by gore of other lands;  
Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent  
Their brethren out to battle—why? for rent!  
Year after year they voted cent. per cent.,  
Blood, sweat and tear-wrung millions—why? for rent!  
They roar'd, they dined, they drank, they swore they meant  
To die for England—why then live?—for rent!  
The peace has made one general malcontent  
Of these high-market patriots; war was rent!  
Their love of country, millions all misspent,  
How reconcile? by reconciling rent!

And will they not repay the treasures lent?  
 No: down with everything, and up with rent!  
 Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy or discontent,  
 Being, end, aim, religion—*rent—rent—rent!*

All the meaner part of contemporary Toryism stands pilloried here. And certainly the attempt to keep up war-prices for food-stuffs by means of enormous protective duties is hard to defend. As poetry there is too much declamation in the piece: yet at its worst there is a genius denied to Churchill in it; and taken as a political manifesto, Byron's practical sagacity made him seize on real points for criticism, and press them home in a statesmanlike spirit. What a contrast there is in the vaguer satires of Shelley! We hardly do justice to Byron's genius, if we do not reckon him among those few modern poets who could treat of affairs, and not decline into prose.

It was to affairs that he finally turned. He had always sympathized with the Greeks in their struggle for independence. He now took an active part in it, and sailed to Hellas. He could do but little, but that was done well. Too soon he was stricken down by fever, and in April 1824 he died.

If thou regret'st thy youth, why live?  
 The land of honourable death  
 Is here:—up to the field, and give  
                     Away thy breath!

There is a gulf between Byron and Shelley (1792—1822), his fellow-poet of the "Satanic" school. Byron never loses hold of reality. Shelley is a dreamer who sees mankind like the spectre of

the Brocken cast on a cloud of imaginative theories. In consequence, though he wrote persistently on political themes and attacked the Reaction in poem after poem, there is very little satire of his on definite events. He loves a general denunciation or aspiration, divorced from earth, like that in the *Ode to Liberty* on Kingship.

O, that the free would stamp the impious name  
Of KING into the dust! or write it there,  
So that this blot upon the page of fame  
Were as a serpent's path, which the light air  
Erases, and the flat sands close behind!

The effect here is unsatiric: the image is too beautiful to be used for anything vile. But Shelley could write true satires, and one at least, *The Mask of Anarchy*, has admirable qualities of imagination and style. It was written on the occasion of the "Manchester Massacre" of 1819, when a public meeting was clumsily dispersed by Hussars at the magistrates' orders, and some persons were killed. The indignation of the Liberals at this result of official incompetence was great, as well it might be: and Shelley came forward to express it in verse. Yet even here he sees representative figures, and the Mask is an allegory.

As I lay asleep in Italy  
There came a voice from over the Sea,  
And with great power it forth led me  
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

I met Murder on the way—  
He had a mask like Castlereagh—  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;  
Seven bloodhounds followed him;

All were fat ; and well they might  
 Be in admirable plight,  
 For one by one, and two by two,  
 He tossed them human hearts to chew  
 Which from his wide cloak he drew.

And many more Destructions played  
 In this ghastly masquerade,  
 All disguised, even to the eyes,  
 Like Bishops, lawyers, peers or spies.  
 Last came Anarchy: he rode  
 On a white horse, splashed with blood;  
 He was pale even to the lips,  
 Like Death in the Apocalypse.  
 And he wore a kingly crown;  
 And in his grasp a sceptre shone;  
 On his brow this mark I saw—  
 "I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!"

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,  
 To the earth their pale brows bowed;  
 Like a bad prayer not over loud,  
 Whispering—"Thou art Law and God."

The beauty of these lines needs no comment, and their technical negligence very little defence. What might surprise us perhaps is the remarkable amount of common-sense concealed in the "baseless fabric of this vision." He points out where the strength of the demos lay.

Rise like Lions after slumber  
 In unvanquishable number,  
 Shake your chains to earth like dew,  
 Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
 Ye are many—they are few.

He has been much laughed at on the count of describing liberty as something to eat.

No—in countries that are free  
 Such starvation cannot be  
 As in England now we see.

But after all the acquisition of political rights by the artisan class since Shelley's time has been followed by their use of them to improve their economic status. Corn Laws and anti-Combination Laws could hardly have existed with an enfranchized labouring population. Shelley of course was not conducting a careful argument. But surely he was right in saying that liberty was only imperfectly in being in the oligarchic England of 1820, and that the tree might be known by its fruits. His underlying logic was sound.

Shelley's influence began after his death; during his life he was ineffectual, and it is characteristic that *The Mask of Anarchy* was not published till 1832. His other really political poems were likewise posthumous. The best of them is the sonnet, *England in 1819*, with all its exaggeration, such as in the line—

“A Senate,—Time's worst statute unrepealed.”

His comic satires, such as *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, are dreary failures. He was only at home in higher realms of the imagination, where he himself seems to move, a “glorious phantom,” among the dreams he created.

With Byron's death we emerge from the fervent period of the English Romantic movement. Keats and Shelley were already gone. Wordsworth, the leader of the other Revolutionary school, and Coleridge, who shared the tendencies of both, were silent. Only Scott remained of those authors we

now think great. There was still Campbell to write fine verse on the Polish revolt of 1830, but he was a satirist in a past taste. Many lesser men, however, like Moore and Hood carried on the traditions of the Romantics and Lake Poets; and the early-Victorian poets, all of them their true spiritual descendants, were soon to come to the fore.

Political conditions were rapidly changing. If we take the year 1834, ten years after Byron's death, we find England handed over to the Middle Classes and in full tide of reform; France freed from Divine Right, and a *soi-disant* Liberal Power; Greece and Belgium independent, and Spain and Portugal constitutional monarchies, rocking miserably to and fro in the attempt to progress. On the other side Metternich is triumphant in Germany and Italy, while Poland is crushed by Russian despotism. Yet even in Central Europe there was ground for hope. The party of "Young Italy," led by Mazzini, was creating a new public opinion for the peninsula, and in spite of Metternich a steady drift to Liberalism was taking place among the German bourgeois.

The actual outbreak, however, was sudden. By 1848 the French were weary of the sham Liberalism of the Monarchy of July; and Louis Philippe's throne was overturned with astonishing ease. The news of the establishment of the Second Republic was a signal to the Liberals elsewhere.

All over Western Europe riots in the capitals were followed by the grant of constitutions. In Germany these revolutions were mainly loyalist, but over the non-Germanic provinces of Austria, the movement was largely one of revolt against the dynasty. The Hapsburgs had identified themselves with reaction and German predominance. They were the foes of the aspirations of the nationalities they ruled. Soon Hungary and Italy were in rebellion. The pro-Austrian dynasties of the latter were driven out, and Charles Albert of Sardinia headed a national crusade. Failure indeed was the lot of the Revolutionaries, although in Germany a little progress was made. But Russia, yet immune from Liberalism, stepped in to reduce Hungary under the Hapsburgs' sway : and Austria was able to proceed against the Italians. Disunion and want of military training made the nationalist forces far the weaker of the two combatants. Charles Albert was defeated and abdicated : Lombardy and Venetia were reconquered : despotism was restored in the lesser states. The Pope, Pius IX, who had shown at first some Liberal leanings, had now become the bitter foe of change. He had fled from Rome, where a Republic was then set up ; and by a strange direction of policy his restoration as a despot was undertaken by Republican France. In spite of the gallant resistance of the Italians, this was effected by the French troops ; and Italy settled down in forced

repose. Her only outward gain was a constitutional government in Piedmont.

It was the striking series of events I have just rehearsed which reawoke the spirit of international satire in England. The pro-Italian sympathies of Byron were inherited by the next generation of poets, and were given their expression by the two Brownings. In Mrs Browning (1802–61) sympathy took the form of directly political poetry, which naturally often contained satiric passages. Her husband and she made their chief residence in Florence, and she was first a hopeful, then an indignant spectator of the course of the Revolution. *Casa Guidi Windows*, the first part written in 1848, the second in 1851, is the record of her impressions. The First Part, belonging to the age of hope, as may be supposed, has little that is satirical about it. Yet even then she saw the rocks ahead. The irresponsible character of the people, who thought the word Liberty a charm to bring all things right, could not but strike her; and she declares that a Liberal Pope is a contradiction in terms.

He is good and great  
According to the deeds a pope can do;  
Most liberal, save those bonds; affectionate,  
As princes may be, and, as priests are, true;  
But only the ninth Pius after eight,  
When all's praised most. At best and hopefullest,  
He's pope—we want a man! His heart beats warm,  
But, like the prince enchanted to the waist,  
He sits in stone, and hardens by a charm  
Into the marble of his throne high-placed.



Mild benediction, waves his saintly arm—

So, good! but what we want's a perfect man,  
Complete and all alive: half travertine

Half suits our need, and ill subserves our plan.

A devil's advocate might say that here we have Robert Browning made perspicuous: and certainly Mrs Browning has changed much from the Elizabeth Barrett who wrote the *Brown Rosary*. But "perfume" of style little agrees with a grave political poem and a workaday subject. Mrs Browning began, like Tennyson, as a classicizing Romanticist, taking form from one tendency, and feeling and sometimes theme from the other. She was now, like Browning, a Romanticist still, but full of subtle present-day thought; like her husband she looks back continually to the Past, without ever forgetting the nineteenth-century standpoint. For the rest, the excellence of the verse and of the style goes without saying.

Her forebodings were more than realized. Pius was indeed a broken reed. In her continuation she says of the future—

Whatsoever deeds they be  
Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

Yet he was to witness great ecclesiastical triumphs, although those of Italy were the theme of his lamentation. Mrs Browning's disillusionment on the staying powers of the Tuscan Liberals was bitterer, for she had less expected it. Like them, she had overrated the power of ideas, without habit to back them, of patriotism without drill.

Perhaps, too, she underrated the wonder of what was accomplished amid all drawbacks. But her comment on what she saw is true in its severity.

Long live the people! How they lived! and boiled  
 And bubbled in the cauldron of the street!  
 How the young blustered, nor the old recoiled,  
 And what a thunderous stir of tongues and feet  
 Trod flat the palpitating bells, and foiled  
 The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it!  
 How down they pulled the Duke's arms everywhere!  
 How up they set new café-signs, to show  
 Where patriots might sip ices in pure air—  
 (The fresh paint smelling somewhat)! To and fro  
 How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare  
 When boys broke windows in a civic glow!  
 How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,  
 And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres.

No wonder the Grand Duke soon came back again: and yet the year or so of revolution did something. Not only did it give birth to far more practical programmes and greater solidarity of feeling between province and province, and class and class, than the tentatives of 1820; but it also sifted out of the ruck of speakers the really capable men who could lead. Meantime the prospect was very dark. There was peace of course.

I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.  
 'Tis nowise peace: 'tis treason, stiff with doom,—  
 'Tis gagged despair and inarticulate wrong,  
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,  
 Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,  
 And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf  
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress  
 The life from these Italian souls, in brief.

Strong words: the unmalleable *terza rima* becomes pliable under the heat of her emotion; and few, perhaps, would contest her condemnation of Austria

at the present time. But Austria's very harshness helped on the Italian cause. The population was converted to the creed of national independence. Particularism, clericalism, indolence itself were swept away for a period by the strong tide of hatred for the foreigner.

They had not long to wait before deliverance came. The deliverer, as chance would have it, was that curious adventurer, Napoleon III. Ambition, generous sympathy and fear for his shaking throne were among his motives in varying proportions, and it is difficult now to feel great enthusiasm or great abhorrence for him. But Mrs Browning was his faithful admirer, through the hopes of the war of 1859, through the peace of Villafranca, and the tortuous intrigues which succeeded it. Her defence of him may be gathered from that fine satire *An August Voice*. By the terms of Villafranca the Grand Duke was to be restored to Tuscany, like his fellow-potentates, and Napoleon formally recommended the Tuscan provisional government to accept him.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

There *are* some things to object to.

He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,

Then called in the foe to protect you.

He taxed you for wines and for meats

Throughout that eight years' pastime  
Of Austria's drum in your streets—

Of course you remember the last time

You called back your Grand Duke.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?

'Twas weak that he fled from the Pitti;

But consider how little he shook  
 At thought of bombarding your city!  
 And, balancing that with this,  
 The Christian rule is plain for us;  
 ...Or the Holy Father's Swiss  
 Have shot his Perugians in vain for us<sup>1</sup>.  
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.  
 Pray take back your Grand Duke.  
 —I, too, have suffered persuasion.  
 All Europe, raven and rook,  
 Screeched at me armed for your nation.

. . . . .  
 You'll take back your Grand Duke?  
 Observe, there's no one to force it,—  
 Unless the Madonna, Saint Luke  
 Drew for you, choose to endorse it.  
 I charge you by great Saint Martino  
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,  
 Remember your dead on Ticino;  
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong.  
 —Bah!—Call back the Grand Duke!

The perplexing question of the rights and wrongs of Napoleon III's policy called forth also his only true political satire from the king of Victorian literature, Tennyson (1809–92). [As a rule, on political and social themes he confined himself to casting side-lights only, as he does in the fanciful tale of *The Princess*, full of sociology as it is.] At other times he states political maxims, as in the beautiful lines "Love thou thy land," but in a most unsatiric strain. He made, however, a definite political attack, although even then not a party one, in *The Third of February 1852*. [Napoleon III had reached his throne by an inglorious route of treachery and violence. Elected President of the Republic, he aimed at becoming a despotic

<sup>1</sup> Sack of Perugia, 1859.

Emperor. His opponents were dangerous, and he crushed them by the *coup d'état* of December 1851. There was a tale of dead in the streets of Paris, and the Republican leaders who could not take flight were transported to Cayenne. It was necessary, of course, for England to recognize a government accepted by Frenchmen; but the English press was loud in its condemnation of Napoleon. Not unnaturally responsible statesmen deprecated such outspoken criticism of a neighbouring government, and their view was made clear in a debate in the Lords. Tennyson gives the case on the other side : a rich and mellow voice as always.

We love not this French God, the child of Hell,  
Wild War, who breaks the converse of the wise;  
But though we love kind Peace so well,  
We dare not ev'n by silence sanction lies.  
It might be safe our censures to withdraw;  
And yet, my Lords, not well; there is a higher law.

As long as we remain, we must speak free,  
Tho' all the storm of Europe on us break;  
No little German state are we,  
But the one voice in Europe: we *must* speak;  
That if to-night our greatness were struck dead,  
There might be left some record of the things we said.

If you be fearful, then must we be bold.  
Our Britain cannot salve a tyrant o'er.  
Better the waste Atlantic roll'd  
On her and us and ours for evermore.  
What! have we fought for Freedom from our prime,  
At last to dodge and palter with a public crime?

The fault of self-righteous criticism of foreign nations is so easy to condemn, that it is as well to remember that there is a moral sense to be shocked by wicked actions. Indeed one cannot but admire

the tact with which Tennyson takes his stand on principle, even if the poem is not among his best. Things of course have changed now, and England possesses no longer the sole free public opinion in Europe. Later in life the poet's chief political utterances were concerned with the dangers of Democracy. But he was a Democrat so far as he was a politician at all, and the few lines of political reflection which occur among his social criticisms can hardly be called satire, especially as they are not delivered *in propria persona*, but through the gloomy medium of *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known to  
all;

Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the tonguesters  
we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them “old experience is a fool,”  
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who cannot read  
can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek ones in  
their place;

Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal in her face.

The dramatic monologue no doubt gives only a mood of Tennyson at most, but the expressions of his moods are worth our hearing. Of recent poets he seems preëminently sage; both his verse and his thought show a mature balance of the faculties, characteristic perhaps of the ripe Revolutionary era.

Curiously enough, Robert Browning (1812–89) also dealt with the career of Napoleon III. Are

we to call *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society*, a political satire? It is not easy to answer the question. The poem gives an extremely subtle exposition of the motives which may have influenced Napoleon, or at least those which he might have wished to be attributed to him. And certainly Browning makes out a case for his client; but perhaps he deals too much with the pure theory of human actions, and does not allow enough for daily hopes and fears and the excitement of the game. He is cruel, I think, to the French Republicans of '48 and '51, but so was Napoleon.

There was uprising, masks dropped, flags unfurled,  
Weapons outflourished in the wind, my faith!  
Heavily did he let his fist fall plumb  
On each perturber of the public peace,  
No matter whose the wagging head it broke—  
From bald-pate craft and greed and impudence  
Of nighthawk at first chance to prowl and prey  
For glory and a little gain beside,  
Passing for eagle in the dusk of the age,—  
To florid head-top, foamy patriotism  
And tribunitial daring, breast laid bare  
Through confidence in rectitude, with hand  
On private pistol in the pocket: these  
And all the dupes of these, who lent themselves  
As dust and feather do, to help offence  
O' the wind that whirls them at you, then subsides  
In safety somewhere, leaving filth afloat,  
Annoyance you may brush from eyes and beard,—  
These he stopped.

Indeed, so did Austria in Italy, although with an alien hand. Austria, too, was intent like Browning's Prince on material improvements and desired a popular prosperity at least till 1848. But one cannot help doubting whether Napoleon III

was either so clear-sighted or so strong as the great mental analyst represents him.

From the philosophic calm of the great early-Victorian poets, we descend in recent times among a more excitable generation. It is true that men like Byron or Shelley could use unmeasured language, but we always seem to feel a certain inner composure in their works. In our days the rapid communication of news and of opinions appears to have produced more surging, if less lasting, emotions on all topics ; and I cannot help thinking that our literature, too, shows signs of a mob-like enthusiasm. To be living it must reflect the temper of the time, and

if we have a little weakness,  
'Tis a passion for a flight of thunderbolts.

Algernon Swinburne (1837—1909) was perhaps the first great poet to show this gusty, emotional tendency, as he was the most sustained in passion and noblest in form of the new school. A fervent republican and nationalist, although now left some way behind by the progress of our opinions, he was an ardent opponent of the Temporal Papacy and of the Second French Empire, both of which powers fell in the last Revolutionary year 1870. His sonnet on the Papal Allocution, "*Popule mi, quid tibi feci?*" is almost too rageful in manner ; but clerical sanctimoniousness is hard to bear.



Thou hast washed thy hands and mouth, saying, "Am I not  
Clean?" And thy lips were bloody, and there was none  
To speak for man against thee, no, not one;  
This hast thou done to us, Iscariot.

A living foe may expect heavy blows, but one wishes that Swinburne had not made Napoleon III's death a subject for exultation. Of course he was fighting tradition: and feared perhaps there might again be Moderates converted, like those who rallied to the Empire in 1870. There is a fine sonnet of his on these latter, traitors, he says, to France.

Then she took  
In her bruised hands their broken pledge, and eyed  
These men so late so loud upon her side  
With one inevitable and tearless look,  
That they might see her face whom they forsook;  
And they beheld what they had left, and died.

A carping critic might say that the rhyme a little damages the thought in the last line; the "intabescantque" from which it is imitated is so much more real a phrase. Swinburne seems frankly to have accepted the taint of unfairness which clings to all satire; but no one can deny the stirring quality of his verse. In the attacks on the House of Lords during the agitation over the Third Reform Bill in 1883, he took a formidable part, lending, besides the irony and scorn of which he was master, a kind of romance to the cause of novelty in such a poem as "*Clear the way!*"

Now that all these things are rotten, all their gold is rust,  
Quenched the pride they lived by, dead the faith and cold  
the lust,  
Shall their heritage not also turn again to dust?

But Swinburne was an Imperialist as well as a Liberal. No one has written fierier verse in support of the Navy ; or more fervently declared for the Union with Ireland. One poem, *The Commonweal*, on the Home Rule movement, is the perfection of wrathful, stinging rhetoric.

What are these that howl and hiss across the strait of westward water?

What is he who floods our ears with speech in flood?  
See the long tongue lick the dripping hand that smokes and  
reeks of slaughter!

See the man of words embrace the man of blood!

Old men eloquent who truckle to the traitors of the time,  
Love not office—power is no desire of theirs:  
What if yesterday their hearts recoiled from blood and fraud  
and crime?

Conscience erred—an error which to-day repairs.

Conscience only now convinces them of strange, though  
transient error;

Only now they see how fair is treason's face;  
See how true the falsehood, just the theft, and blameless is  
the terror,

Which replaces just and blameless men in place.

One wonders what posterity will think of these lines when the ashes of the Home Rule controversy have at length grown cold. If it condemns them, it will also record, one would think, the reign of crime in Ireland which gave rise to their indignation. The same emotions are expressed in a less transcendental vein by Mr Kipling in his lines on the result of the Parnell Commission.

Cleared in the face of all mankind beneath the winking skies,  
Like Phoenixes from Phoenix Park (and what lay there?) they  
rise.

Go shout it to the emerald seas—give word to Erin now,  
Her honourable gentlemen are cleared—and this is how:—

They only paid the Moonlighter his cattle-hocking price,  
 They only helped the murderer with counsel's best advice,  
 But—sure it keeps their honour white—the learned court  
 believes

They never gave a piece of plate to murderers or thieves.

They never told the ramping crowd to card a woman's  
 hide,

They never marked a man for death—what fault of theirs he  
 died?

They only said "Intimidate," and talked and went away—  
 By God, the boys that did the work were braver men than  
 they!

One cannot but be conscious of a change in altitude from one poet to the other, but the direct, prosaic reasoning and swinging metre of Mr Kipling need fear no comparison.

Mr Kipling is, however, best known now as the singer of a militant Imperialism and of the British Colonies overseas. His work here is mainly of a laudatory description, but occasionally he turns with patriotic vehemence to satirize the home-staying Englishman and his pursuit of pleasure and frivolity. The "flannelled fools" and "muddled oafs" are within everyone's recollection. Not that he does not often speak, as in *The White Man's Burden*, of the responsibilities of Empire in a tone, alike unexultant and unsatiric. But throughout his ideal is the rule of the adventurous Anglo-Saxon over other races.

None the less, the Imperialistic ideal has not been undisputed in English literature. Mr W. S. Blunt joined issue with *The White Man's Burden* in *Satan Absolved*, a play which shows considerable

rhetorical skill. To him Empire over other races does not present itself in a praiseworthy light. In the drama, his Satan addresses his God thus :—

Nay, thou dost not hear,  
Or thou hadst loosed thy hand like lightning in the clear  
To smite their ribald lips with palsy, these false priests,  
These Lords who boast thine aid at their high civic feasts,  
The ignoble shouting crowds, the prophets of their Press,  
Pouring their daily flood of bald self-righteousness,  
Their poets who write big of the "White Burden." Trash !  
The White Man's Burden, Lord, is the burden of his cash.

Thus each side continues the old satiric warfare. They are hearty combatants, and their censures are unreserved. So did the greater genius of Dryden turn and rend his insulting opponents, Shadwell and Settle, in the first days of Whig and Tory.

Yet it is pleasant to turn from the clamour and dust to the work of one of the most poetic of poets, Mr William Watson. Mr Watson is so emphatically a scholar, that it is hard to say to what modern poetical tendency he belongs. The forms of many schools are blended in him. Perhaps he most reminds us of the equable, lucid sadness of Matthew Arnold, but Tennyson's rich imagination and Wordsworth's recluse musings have their part in him. His satire has a certain aloofness about it, one might say an unworldliness, which makes it hard to associate with party-conflicts, though I imagine his general point of view would be that of a Liberal. How admirable is the *Sketch of a Political Personage 1885* ! The grave couplets

skilfully avoid the air of smartness, almost inseparable from the imitation of Pope. One can only object to the odd fourth line.

Cast in this fortunate Olympian mould,  
The admirable [Hartington?] behold;  
Whom naught could dazzle or mislead, unless  
'Twere the wild light of fatal cautiousness;  
Who never takes a step from his own door  
But he looks backward ere he looks before,  
When once he starts, 'twere rash indeed to say  
That he will travel far upon his way:  
But this is sure, he will not turn aside,  
Or at the beck of Jack o' Lanthorn ride.  
The flippant deem him dull and saturnine,  
The summed-up phlegm of a whole ducal line;  
Others admire that sober mass and weight—  
A simple Doric pillar of the State,  
So inharmonious with the baser style  
Of neighbouring columns grafted on the pile,  
So proud and imperturbable and chill,  
Chosen and matched so excellently ill,  
He seems a monument of pensive grace,  
Ah, how majestically out of place!

Would that some call he could not choose but heed—  
Of private passion or of public need—  
At last might sting to life that slothful power,  
And snare him into greatness for an hour!

Mr Watson's chief contributions to political satire, however, have been his assaults on the Sultan of Turkey during the Armenian massacres. He did well to be angry at that atrocious fact: but, perhaps, fiery indignation is not best suited to his somewhat chill Muse. I may quote *Europe at the Play* as being probably the finest of these poems of his. It is written in staid mood than the rest: and, if present events in Turkey leave us wondering whether we were deluded in 1896 or are dreaming now, Europe's attitude is consistent still.

O languid audience, met to see  
The last act of the tragedy  
On that terrific stage afar,  
Where burning towns the footlights are,—  
O listless Europe, day by day  
Callously sitting out the play!

. . . . .  
Perchance, in tempest and in blight,  
On Europe, too, shall fall the night!  
She sees the victim overborne,  
By worse than ravening lions torn.  
She sees, she hears, with soul unstirred,  
And lifts no hand, and speaks no word,  
But vaunts a brow like theirs who deem  
Men's wrongs a phrase, men's rights a dream.  
Yet haply she shall learn, too late,  
In some blind hurricane of Fate,  
How fierily alive the things  
She held as fool's imaginings,  
And, though circuitous and obscure,  
The feet of Nemesis how sure.

It is hard to draw general conclusions from history ; but perhaps this last couplet has claims on our acceptance.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

The course of English Political Satire has led us past many stages of the national history and literature. Naturally there are still more which had no direct connection with Satiric Poetry : some of the greatest names in English verse are necessarily absent. But as a whole English satire furnishes an excellent commentary on events and on the growth of the national genius.

We started from the time when a growing national consciousness under John led to a criticism of national institutions and political personages. The rapid development of political parties under Henry III brought with it a real discussion of the principles of government. Meantime the same national feeling accompanied by the spread of culture results in the slow abandonment of Norman French and the use of the native tongue of the land which could appeal to a larger audience. Then the showy reign of Edward III is reflected in contemporary satire, its unattractive Leonine hexameters, its attacks on foreign nations, its

consciousness of rottenness at home. The finer side of its life, the chivalry, tenderness and grace of it, are preserved for us in Chaucer, but Chaucer was no satirist in politics. So he gives us the charm of the Cisalpine and French influences under Richard II, not the hollowness of that premature culture, nor the misery of the Peasants' Revolt. Yet these cankers are the theme of rougher verse, which, with its theological squabbles and jagged metres, heralds the political and literary decadence of the Fifteenth Century.

Then comes the nursing despotism of the Tudors, which fostered the national growth, which welcomed the Reformation and the Renaissance to stimulate it, which silenced political criticism, and gave full play to Art. Thus satire, save in furtive ballads, takes a social form. The age, it seems, is much in fault, but its rulers are wise and good. We have also the nobler satire of national foes, but even that is transferred to the dreamland of the *Faerie Queene*, or the make-believe of the play-house.

We next find despotism growing old, and the two religious and political parties at strife : and in satire there commences a hail of witticisms, diluted by Wither's endless harangues. But practical political argument is only met with in a few ballads, which, foundlings as they were, involved no risk to their parents. Then even these weak voices die away under Cromwell's tyranny.



True political satire, like the steady current of English political life, begins with the Restoration. It was then, if ever, that Englishmen chose evolution, not revolution, for the national watchword, Charles II himself, with all his charm and his vices, being but the straw to show which way the wind was blowing. Now we have the satires which deal with practical policy, and with the facts of political life. The old imaginative literary models, the witty, but unprecise, abuse of Cleveland, became less and less suitable for the new needs. Poets found their guide in the contemporary French classics, with their sense of form, their good sense, and their epigrammatic reasoning. This practical school of poetry reaches its zenith in the veiled history of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. After Dryden, the influence of the Latins and the French tendency to abstraction combine to withdraw the best poets from political warfare, which often lends only an increased bitterness to their moral satires. For current politics up to 1760 we must turn largely to ballads and songs, which express such wider public opinion as still existed under the oligarchy. Great men did homage to their importance by writing them.

A new era commences with the *Rolliad*. Public opinion was now awake, Parliamentary warfare and party-discipline were become habits. There began the familiar struggle to capture the public for one side or the other. Scurrilous in the

*Rolliad*, lofty and zealous in the *Anti-Jacobin*, poetical satire grew to be a powerful weapon in the contest. With Byron it becomes a disseminator of new ideas, and appeals to a European audience. The author of *The Vision of Judgment* ranks with Dryden, for in satire he was the chief of the great Romantic movement, which expressed the ideals of the time. And the Romantic movement was a vivifying, not a regulating force, like Classicism.

The stream then divides : *Praed* accommodates the lighter satire, descendant of the ballads, to modern manners. Mrs Browning works the international vein of Byron in the same spirit. And the succession of both of these continues to the present day.

It is evident from the foregoing that English poetical satire is preëminently English in character. It admits foreign influence, but its motives, purposes and ideals are drawn from national circumstances. It developed in close connection with the development of the party-system. Its temper is English. True the rich imagination we are accustomed to in English literature cannot well show itself in satire, though the feat was accomplished by Byron. Satire deals too much with the humdrum and prosaic for that. But more everyday qualities of Englishmen are largely represented. Of humour, wit and good sense it is full. I have endeavoured to select such passages as illustrations which bring

out the best points of the authors. Not to mention the fact that stale jesting is a mere weariness to read, it is the finer passages which supply us with the positive achievement both of the individual author and of his times. And as a rule it is that which gives its character to a period: it is that which constitutes its legacy to posterity.

In spite of its general inferiority as imaginative poetry, it has been seen how largely political satire shares in the merits of other contemporary verse. Elizabethan charm, eighteenth-century keenness, Romantic inspiration, are all to be found in it in due season. But it also has other qualities of a more permanent nature.

It is practical. Even its theories have the air of being hastily manufactured for a particular end. It is generally a party-weapon. [It is at its best in criticizing facts, in applying experience to theory. Its object is to prove someone's incompetence, to revenge some misdeed, to decry some scheme. Its methods are empiric and inductive. Never does it deduce happily from a doctrine.] ✓

Then it is serious on the whole. It would be difficult to find another series of works which have so much wit and humour and so little gaiety. [The pleasure of satire is taken sadly here, and if we come upon a rowdy kind of mirth, there are wine-stains on the page. I cannot but think this lack a real defect, for a mild cheerfulness, admirable on another occasion, is hardly a sufficient corrective to the bitterness of satire.] ✓

Allied to the lack of gaiety is the roughness of all but the latest English satire. Mere ridicule does not suffice it. To know its adversary is mortally wounded it must see him disembowelled. So a bludgeon is preferred to the rapier. Too often this has given an opportunity to brutal malice ; at its best there is an unspiteful humour in the sport which is not un-engaging.

✓ [It would be hard to fix on any particular genre of poetry for political satire, as it has employed practically all : but one may notice that the two best satires in the realm of politics have both been narratives. Partly doubtless this is due to the greater scope for varied powers allowed by a tale. Also, perhaps, the narrative form may be more suitable for a nation, not prone to reflective generalizations.

It has abundantly appeared how powerful a weapon political satire is. At the worst it could always catch the ear of the educated public, and even at times of the uneducated. Marvell's lampoons helped to solidify the Country-Party, and form the future Whig policy. Dryden not only performed a like service for the Tories, but it may be questioned whether he has not influenced unduly our view of the events he describes. Shaftesbury remains for us "for crooked counsels fit." Byron again, besides his enormous contemporary influence, has coloured our estimate of the causes striving for victory during the European Restoration.

These instances show the power of satire, but

do they show its utility taken by itself? All parties can use it, and if we approve of the party-creed or laud the results of some conflict, we shall think the satires, that aided the consummation, of good effect. Yet this benefit lies not in the satires, but ✓ in the cause. They were weapons, their use was to decry and to defame. They were rooted in unfairness. We are agreeably surprised when they scourge in just terms a real, undoubted vice. Often they attempt deliberately to mislead.

No doubt one might say that the very evils of satire help to produce a kind of natural selection among statesmen. They increase the severity of the test a would-be ruler must undergo: they make him the more careful of his behaviour public and private.

To this fierce merit we might add the milder one of its function in keeping public interest alive among the tiresome details and remote contingencies which must compose much of politics. Swift could make even Wood's Halfpence a burning question; and what had the ordinary Englishman to do with Italy in 1848?

Then again great satires are written by men of genius, and, though they might misuse their talent, such men could not avoid laying stress on the higher side of the party-doctrine they represent. In this way they not only helped to elevate the tone of politics in their own time, but also enriched their time's legacy to the future.

Finally, there is another service political satires render, which is peculiarly necessary to a government based on discussion. One of the greatest evils in such a state is the prevalence of mere words and phrases, and of the vague Pecksniffian virtues. [Now to satire cant and humbug are proper game. It brings fine professions down to fact, points the contrast between the commonplace reality and its tinsel dress, and by the dread of ridicule raises the standard of plain-dealing. Other means of criticism as well act as a check on more opprobrious faults in public life. But satire is the best agent to keep us free from taking words for substance.]

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## CORRIGENDA

- p. 11 heading, substitute *GOLIAS*.  
p. 51, l. 9 for "sweate" read "sweete."  
p. 62, l. 5 for "of" read "and."  
p. 77, l. 14 for "keeps" read "keeps up."







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